THE STEPS OF LIFE

Further ESSAYS ON HAPPINESS

BY CARL HILTY

TRANSLATED BY MELVIN BRANDOW

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Further ESSAYS ON HAPPINESS

BY

CARL HILTY

PROFESSOR OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BERN

TRANSLATED BY MELVIN BRANDOW

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF OUR FATHER
IN LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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INTRODUCTION

The welcome offered to the translation of Professor Hilty's "Happiness" amply justifies the translation of a second series of his essays. The same notes of tranquil reflection and keen observation, which have drawn to the earlier volumes many readers both in Europe and America, are here struck again. Professor Hilty is not a preacher, and his essays are not sermons. He is a professor of Constitutional Law, and the studies of life which these volumes represent are products of his leisure hours, wrought out of his meditation and experience. Sin and sorrow, culture and courage, a just judgment of others, a rational optimism, and a simple Christian faith — these are the "Steps of Life" up which this wise teacher mounts, and which he invites thoughtful readers to climb. Laurence Oliphant is reported to have said that what England in the nineteenth century most needed was "a spiritually minded man of the world" — a man, that is to say, who could live in the world without being subdued to that he worked in, a man who could survey and judge his world with the sanity and insight of the spiritual mind. Professor Hilty in a very exceptional degree meets this test.

His vocation is among the institutions of the political world. His last professional treatise dealt with the history of the Referendum in mediæval Switzerland. When in these Essays he approaches the problems of other professions, such as those of theology or Biblical criticism, it is as an amateur, who satisfies himself with conclusions which must appear to many minds untenable. It is, however, precisely this unprofessional character of his reflections which gives them their importance. Here is a learned man, whose business is with other studies, and who has known much both of public honor and of private affliction, who refreshes and consoles himself with the observation and interpretation of life, and surveys the shifting landscape of human experience from the height of a responsive mind and a chastened will. It is the testimony of a spiritually minded man of the world.

There are signs enough at the present time that the spirit of the age is dominated by the creed of commercialism and materialism; and there are writers enough who deplore this movement of events and who prophesy social disasters; but something good may be believed of a generation which is so ready to welcome

books like Professor Hilty's. It may be true, as has been cleverly said, that many people like to read about the "Simple Life" who have not the least idea of practising it; but the inclination to such literature may be more reasonably traced to a more serious cause. It indicates a survival, beneath the boisterous prosperity of the time, of the instincts of idealism, which still create in great numbers of persons a profound dissatisfaction with the commercial tests of happiness and success. Never was a generation less contented than ours with itself, — less satiated or tranquil in spirit. Increase of wealth has brought with it increase of restlessness; outward prosperity has induced nervous prostration; expansion of opportunity has created expansion of desire. The fundamental problems of sin and sorrow have become all the more baffling and mysterious as the superficial problems of subsistence and livelihood have been solved. At such a time it is not surprising that thoughtful minds turn eagerly to any teacher who speaks with confidence of the realities of idealism, who faces experience with a serene hope, and who points out the "Steps of Life" which lead toward the things which are unseen and eternal. To such readers

Professor Hilty has already brought courage and faith, and they will gladly accept his further guidance.

FRANCIS G. PEABODY.

Harvard University, December, 1906.

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I. SIN AND SORROW

I. SIN AND SORROW

LTHOUGH the Way to Happiness is ever plain and open to all, yet not all who have seen it succeed in really finding it. Like poor Pliable in the "Pilgrim's Progress," they turn back when once they have fallen into the Slough of Despond; and it is they, and not those who have never tried it, who give the narrow path to genuine happiness the poor repute it has with so-called realists.

Such deserters are often highly gifted and, at first, earnest; and they are by no means always lacking in the courage needed to seek the truth and for its sake to give up the enticing illusions of life. But on the very threshold of that better life which alone brings peace stand two dark figures, like the guardians at the mouth of Hell in the "Paradise Lost"; and before them even the stoutest heart trembles, and they let no man by who has not first had it out with them.

What stands in the way of our happiness is a twofold terrible reality known to every one who has lived beyond the first half-unconscious age of childhood—Sin and Sorrow. To be set free from these is

the true motive in all men's strivings after happiness; no philosophy, no religion, no economics, no politics, that is not essentially directed to this end.

Of these two great antagonists, with which every man has to engage in hard conflict, the first is Sin. It begins early in life, for the most part earlier than sorrow, earlier even than the common expression of "the innocence of childhood" implies. "Ye lead us into life amain, ye let poor man all sinful grow, and then abandon him to pain;" thus Goethe accuses the "heavenly powers," really meaning, however, an inexorable fate which, in his view, dominates human existence, and against which neither Promethean revolt avails nor the attempt (more common since his day) to deny the existence of sin altogether. In every man there lives a relentlessly real feeling that duty and sin do exist, and that sin not merely follows transgression, but is lodged within it and must pour its consequences with mathematical certainty upon the head of the guilty one, unless averted by some means or other; and that can be by no mere philosophical train of reasoning.

Try (if you would be so bold) by mere negation to declare yourself free from these

realities, rooted like granite in all human existence! Notwithstanding your resolution, there is, all the same, in every action of yours, yes, in every thought, *a right way*, and if you do not pursue it, then it is a sin. Or rather do not try; it is a reef on which millions have already gone to pieces, and on which you will go to pieces, too. "Beyond all Good and Evil" is a place not to be found on earth outside the mad-house, where many men, often highly gifted, are shut up to-day; not merely by chance, for the human spirit sinks into madness whenever, in all earnestness, it seeks to disregard these truths in its own life.

I am quite well aware that this does not "explain" the feeling of duty and sin; besides, it is a matter of indifference to man's welfare how this feeling is to be explained, whether as a superstition handed down for many generations, or as a belief wholly in accord with reason. Even if it be a superstition, the champion has not yet been found who is able to set humanity free from a nightmare which has burdened it from the beginning of time; the isolated, weak attempts to do so have for the most part fallen out very unhappily for those who undertook them. A man

who, with clear, unclouded brow, openly denies duty and sin, and, though boldly believing he may do anything he pleases, has yet gone through his whole life glad-heartedly, with the certainty of his inner conviction unruffled—such a man we should first like to see, before we believe in him. And though such a man were to be found, he would stand alone and would be incomprehensible to all other men, so differently constituted.

Duty and sin become wholly intelligible only when we recognize a personal, extra-mundane God from whose will this inner law proceeds; while the so-called "immanence" of God is but another name for atheism or pantheism. To be sure, it would be idle to desire a reasoned explanation of the transcendental God; everything transcendental by its very nature escapes our comprehension, and for this reason the so-called "proofs" of the existence of God have no power to convince the human understanding. Nor do they seem as yet ever to have convinced any one who did not first want to be. In so far, therefore, atheism has a certain right to declare itself not convinced; but it is itself just as little in a position to prove that its own system is in any way reasonable, or to

solve the doubts which that system generates. Therefore so long as humanity abides, the matter will perhaps stand simply at this, that one can not prove there is a God, but just as little, if God indeed exists, can one remove him out of the account of his own life by a mere denial. The decisive question of all questions for every man (but always a question) will be: whether he shall attempt such a denial and be able to attain the inward peace he expects therefrom, or whether he shall acknowledge as binding the categorical demand of the oldest divine revelation, "I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt have no other gods before me."

The willing recognition of this demand (which in its second half already comprehends all morality) by a man who has come to full deliberation over himself and his life-purpose,—this it is that first brings him out of a thoroughly ineffectual revolt against a divine order he can not change by his thoughts alone, on into the possibility of a harmony with himself and the surrounding world. And besides, the whole history of humanity is nothing else than the gradual unfolding of such a free will of the nations toward the will of God. Whoever denies this, and lives up to his

denial, acts against his own welfare and the end for which he was destined, as well as against the good of mankind; and this state of war against God and man, as well as against one's own life, is very likely the cause that calls forth the feeling of sin. There is no other and better explanation for it, in my opinion.

Moreover, what Evil really is and exactly what Christ understood by the prayer for deliverance from it will, as long as we live on earth, remain just as obscure to us as what God is. We only know, and from experience alone, that we can yield ourselves into its power, and further, that it possesses no other power over us than we ourselves grant it. This especially comes to pass through our disobedience to what is true and through the preponderance of the sensual, animal life over the spiritual. Every more finely organized man feels this forthwith through a gradually increasing physical discomfort from which nothing else than a turn-about shall free him. And likewise, the spirit of truth in a man or a book, in a whole household or people, one recognizes as something beneficent, while the spirit of falsehood he feels to be something unhealthy and poisonous, like bad air in a room, to which one can, to be

sure, accustom oneself, if one desires. A man can, of course, try to dismiss all this matter from his thoughts; he has perfect freedom of will to do so. But whether it will let *him* alone is quite another and more important question.

We neither can nor will, therefore, dispute with those who assert they have never harbored any feeling of sin; we can not look into their souls. We only reply that they would in that case find themselves in an extreme minority and really at the stage of evolution of the animals; for these also have no feeling of moral obligation and therefore no sin, but everything is permitted them that their natural impulse demands. If, on the other hand, such men possess the feeling of sin only now and then even, still it must be said it is not explicable in any other way than from the standpoint of a moral order of the world which we can not change and contrary to which we may not behave, nor even think.

We turn now to those who acknowledge all this. For them the problem is to find a way of release from a burden which is by far the most unendurable of all earthly burdens.

The first thing to say to them is this:

Do not let sin get the least foothold in your life; you must and can not do otherwise. For what afterward becomes a crushing actuality is at first, for the most part, merely a fleeting thought, an arrow from one knows not whence, shot into the unoccupied soul. And if it lingers there, if it is not at once thrust forth while it is still easy, then there soon arises an evil propensity, upon which mostly follows, first the clouding of the moral consciousness, and at last the deed. After the deed comes often enough a despair that hopes for no salvation more; or what has happened is now for the first time justified before oneself with materialistic philosophy: in either case the death of the true spiritual life.

But unfortunately this counsel to "resist the beginnings" is only a very theoretical one, and they who have the bold faith of being able always to do this from a voluntary disposition toward the good, and by their own strength, will, in the course of their own life and in their observation of others, be compelled bit by bit to lessen altogether too far the demands they make of human kind. This is the especial weakness of the noble Kantian philosophy. A grievous passage through some Valley of Humiliation, or an abate-

ment in the clear vision of his moral consciousness inevitably comes upon the man who, at first, believed he was able, with uplifted head and without any help from without, to tread the Path of Virtue without wandering from the way.

Therefore the second counsel is more important for man as he is actually constituted: Free thyself at any cost from every sin thou bearest, if thou wouldst arrive at happiness. This way passes the unerring road; just as, in Purgatory, Dante could enter the portal of salvation only by passing the grave angel guardian sitting upon the diamond threshold with naked sword. There is no other way to set your soul truly free. Goethe, it is true, has tried in the second part of "Faust" to discover a kind of natural salvation from sin; and this, in fact, has remained the path which many, still to-day, are seeking out: namely, the noble enjoyment of nature, which at least now and then can silence the accusing voices within; with art and the charm of the beautiful, wherein many perceive at once the consummation and the expiation of material man; or finally, action, a share in the work of civilization, which is to uplift the depressed heart and to delude itself with the applause of the

multitude, at least for the moment. But, alongside all this, nevertheless, sin remains inexorably standing, a melancholy fact; and even the great poet was unable to set it aside in any credible way. A divine love that receives a man to its bosom even though he be not repentant, but, on the contrary, persists to the last moment in defiantly living out his life in his own way —a divine love of this sort is a mere picture of the fancy, an arbitrary poetical invention, against which even Goethe's Promethean soul was obliged, for its own honor, to protest with the last breath of the body.

Yet even repentance does not alone release from sin, but there must be a trustful turning of the soul to God, whose mighty arm of mercy (as Manfred says in Dante's great poem) receives all that turn to it; and it will not be prevented from doing so, even by an authoritative decree of a church.

And in this regard the greatness of the sin is no matter. What *is* great and small in human sin anyway, weighed, not according to human notions and the penal law-books, but in the eye of a judge who knows all and metes a perfect justice?

Whoever finds within himself the courage to appeal to His mercy has already received it in all essentials, for the dis-

favor of God consists mainly in the "judgment of obduracy," a judgment which lets the offender remain unbroken and defiant until his end, and prevents him from calling upon this mercy.

Our churches, to be sure, have in a measure widely strayed from this simple way of atonement and affirm a very much more positive manner of salvation from sin, either through outward works, or at least through definite dogmatic conceptions of reconciliation with God.

In the first case, we hold that all outward works of penitence, as well as all "good works," are valueless unless they spring spontaneously from the inner turning to God. Even then they are never meritorious although helpful and pacifying. The essential thing in "repentance" (a great matter, whose import, however, we have almost lost) is not the sorrow of regret, which rather, often enough, merely "worketh death," but on the one hand, the complete turning of the will toward a change of life, and on the other hand, the conviction that, for this purpose, we stand in need of another power than our own, a power without which the will itself often enough remains only a "good intention."

Quite intelligible, therefore, at least for

the Christian churches and their sincere adherents, is the appeal to the help of Christ as the Saviour sent into the world by God himself, and who for that very reason may not be ignored. But the oppressed soul does not, therefore, need an extensive "Christology"; indeed, there is really no Christology that is trustworthy, but God alone knows the nature of this Saviour and the mystery of salvation through him. All that men have spoken and written about it for two centuries now has been condemned to unfruitfulness and has given real comfort to no one, although human error in these matters, if held in good faith, has probably of itself never caused any one to be lost. Only by the practical but unfailing road of experience, then, will you learn that a simple "Lord, help me," coming from the very depths of the heart, shall open a way that, to all your philosophy, to all your submission to church, to all your severest works of penitence, had remained closed as with tenfold iron doors. This barricade is opened for you by the one great, unconditioned word of the gospel: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Whether you are to confess to men besides, and what reparation you have to

make to them, is to be determined only after you have experienced this salvation, after you have taken the Hand that lifts you out of the unstable floods of uncertainty and anxiety, and sets you upon the firm ground of faith. Before, it is quite to no purpose; rather, this is just the obstacle which keeps far the most men from any confession of repentance—which has perhaps to take place before a third person, on whom one then fears to stand, his life long, in spiritual dependence. But very possibly you will feel yourself called to go to a man for confession; for in addition to its transcendental side Christianity is, after all, a human brotherhood also. And this will be especially the case when pride is in your soul. In that event there enters, perhaps, the psychological necessity of a humbling before men also, not alone before God; and the actual expression of forgiveness, by a man called thereto by God, contains for many men a quieting influence that they can not find in a mere thought-process, real as it may be.

If, then, you know such a man, if you feel this inner summons, if you can resolve to speak to him with entire sincerity as before God himself, and if you are willing to accept his directions without reserva-

tions, then simply go quietly to him; in so doing, it is possible you are attaining to a greater advance in the inner life, and in shorter time than otherwise. But if even a single one of these presuppositions is wanting, then such a confession will profit you nothing at all. And if you should make of it a merely human transaction, out of regard to an existing ecclesiastical form, or in order thereby to show honor to another, then you dishonor what is most hallowed, and bring upon yourself, and upon him you honor, the greatest harm.

And make up your mind to escape now, while it is still time and while the summons still comes to you, no matter through whom or in what way; whether through a voice within or a voice from without, whether by chance or of set purpose, whether through sermon, or book, or newspaper, or any other instrumentality. The Book of Job asserts as a fact of experience that the summons comes to every one "twice or thrice":

"*Lo, all these things doth God work,*
Twice, yea, thrice with a man,
To bring back his soul from the pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of the living."

But as a rule the summons has an outward semblance no more striking than that of any other communication. Much more than upon its form and manner it depends upon this : that it touch in the innermost heart of man a string still sensitive to this tone, struck from another key than one's ordinary life and thought.

And so, if the summons shall come to you once more, then arouse yourself, but at once, where you are and as you are, in business, on the street, in society, even in the theatre or in any other place ; delay for not one minute the resolution to strike every sin out of your life. Then everything will become easier and clearer ; that gloomy spirit and those false conceptions, which are simply the direct consequence of sin itself, will leave you, and a day will come at last when you also can say : " Now am I become, in God's sight, a soul that findeth peace."

II

If you should ask men which of these two great evils, sin and sorrow, they had rather see banished from their life, the majority, we fear, would choose to see sorrow banished. But wrongly ; for not only is sin very often the basal cause of

sorrow, but it is also comparatively easy to bear heavy sorrow if no feeling of guilt is bound up with it. On the contrary, even in the midst of grief one often feels a closer nearness to God that beatifies the human heart in its inmost depths; one feels, too, the truth of the saying that the spirit of man can be joyous even in distress. And so, beyond all doubt, the greatest of evils is sin; and in this fact lies, what is very often overlooked, a tremendous equalizing force in human conditions, which in this respect know no distinction between rich and poor.

On the other hand, to be sure, the relation of the two evils to each other is, not rarely, an inverted one: the first impulse to sin comes sometimes from sorrow, the tormenting anxiety how to get through life, the conviction, in troubled moments almost forcing itself upon us, that one will not be able to carry through the hard struggle for existence if one is too painfully scrupulous, if one may not use a little dishonesty, deception, and force, "just as everybody else does, and as seems unfortunately to be inevitable, you know, in human affairs." Without this conviction many men would be upright who now think they can not be. This is really a

superstition which to-day almost seems to be more prevalent than ever, and to destroy it should be one of the chief concerns of the Christianity of our time. Christianity was also much concerned therewith in the days of its beginnings, when it gave not merely the counsel but the command, "not to be anxious," giving at the same time a very positive direction as to how the command might be carried out: "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

But this counsel, of course, presupposes trust in God; without this, it is of no value. An unconquerable anxiety is, therefore, in most cases evidence of a secret atheism. Among the most remarkable of the many remarkable things of this life is this: that so many of the very wisest people voluntarily submit to this punishment, their whole life through, when they could have things so much better. For God is faithful, a rock on which one may rely; this is the one thing we most surely know of him, the one thing we can most easily ourselves experience. But faithfulness is in its nature reciprocal, and our own faithfulness consists far less in any sort of acts or confessions than in the resolute shutting out of all distrust every

time it would approach us in the manifold difficulties and injustices of this life.

To be sure, complete confidence in the possibility of a release from sorrows through trust in God comes to be a certainty only through experience; but there is, in the Bible and in countless later writings and in many human lives, such a mass of assurances and experiences of trustworthy men, and on the other hand, there are, before our eyes, so many obvious examples of the impossibility of any other release from sorrow, that we may fittingly ask: Why is there so great an aversion to making this experience? Why, when men are tormented with sorrow, often to the point of despair, why do they not at least make trial of this, instead of seeking death? The reason, perhaps, is mostly this: they do not want to be dependent on God; they had much rather put dependence on pitiless men. Indeed, the assurances of the Bible may be appropriated in their literal, full meaning only by the man who has sought no alien help beside, nor any human help at all before he has first sought God's. But how many are there to-day who do that? So long as the sun of fortune shines for them, they believe in their "lucky

star" with a kind of ludicrous or sacrilegious fatalism, and therewith a secret fear often takes them unawares; for "happiness of this kind needs many supports, while the happiness of those at one with the will of God has need of but one." But when once they have misfortune and no human aid to ward it off, they go all to pieces and fall into the manifold "nervous affections" of our time, into sleeplessness and ceaseless unrest, and these bring them to the numberless sanitariums, for the most part vainly; for "the sorrow of the world worketh death," and against that no nerve specialist nor hydropathy avails.

It is certain that there is a way of release from continuous sorrow; it must be just as certain that single and even frequent sorrows belong to the necessary events of our life. There can be no human life without sorrows; but to live with sorrows, yes, with many sorrows, yet free from sorrow's burden, that is the art of life toward which we are being trained. It is, therefore, an everyday experience that men who have too few sorrows buy themselves some; for riches, which in the view of most men are meant to release one from anxiety, are not fitted to do that; they are "deceitfulness," as Christ himself calls

them, and his warnings against them, which we are wont to take so lightly, are surely not there for merely "decorative effect."

We must have sorrows, and for three substantial reasons: in the first place, in order not to become arrogant and frivolous; sorrows are the weight in the clock, to regulate its proper movement; misfortune is really in most cases the only means of salvation for those who are not on the right way. In the second place, to enable us to have fellow-feeling with others; people who are too well nourished and free from customary sorrows easily become egotists, who at last not merely have compassion for pale faces no longer, but regard them as a kind of offence, a disturbing element in their ease; they may go so far as to feel downright hatred for them. And finally, because sorrows alone effectively teach us to trust in God and seek his aid; for the granting of prayer and the consequent release from sorrow is the only convincing proof of God, and likewise the test of the truth of Christianity to which Christ himself challenges us. Therefore the evil days are good; without them, most men would never come at all to the soberer thoughts.

Furthermore, the deliverances from sorrow, the triumphal days when a man beholds a mountain-load rolled away, belong to undoubtedly the purest moments of happiness in life, moments that God must grant to his own, if he is truly merciful to them. Spurgeon, therefore, rightly says, in one of his finest sermons, that if we truly trust God, he is, in the beginning, better than our fears, then better than our hopes, and finally better than our wishes. For his people, sorrow always lasts only so long as it still has a task to fulfil on their behalf.

If one wished to put the truth a little paradoxically, then one might, with frank directness, say to many a man who is forever complaining of all sorts of little things, to whom much in the world is not right, neither weather, nor politics, nor social relations, "You have too few cares; make yourself some, care for others who have too many; then you will no longer have any of that sickly, discontented disposition, or at least will no longer give so much heed to what now makes you unhappy." People in particular who have a spiritual calling should never wish themselves freedom from sorrow, for then they can never effectively speak with others who have

sorrows; nay, in most cases they can not really understand them.

And so we repeat: incessant sorrow there must not be; from such there is a way of escape; if you will not use it, then bear your sorrow as a punishment therefor. But of occasional troubles you must accept a generous share with good grace and overcome them through the power of your spirit and will.

And now we come to the various human remedies for sorrow.

The best is Patience and Courage. "Whoever," says Bishop Sailer, "is able to submit to God in every hour of darkness will soon see the morning light again arise; for his submission is the cock-crow that heralds and greets the coming day." And indeed it is a fact remarkably true to experience, how often all difficulty vanishes as soon as we have taken a stand in regard to it, as soon as we have actually shouldered it. Our very best possessions we really possess only when we were once in our life compelled to give them up. Besides, it is easy to notice, from our own experience, that even our judgment of things that befall us is often wrong at first. Again and again we discover that what

was apparently unpropitious and injurious has later revealed itself as advantageous, and that, on the other hand, so-called lucky events have turned out to be of uncommonly little use, if not actually harmful. And so, one is very sensible if he can suspend his judgment in times of anxiety; and still more help can many a time be gained from the thought that all trouble is always borne merely from moment to moment, and that the next moment will bring a change, or at least new strength. Very often trouble lasts, in its full force, no longer than three days; those one may easily undertake to endure. The real burden of unhappiness consists in the notion that it is going to last an unlimited while; this is merely a delusion of the fancy.

But there are still some minor remedies besides, or at least palliatives, and it is well worth the pains for one to review them quietly and get a clear conception of them; for what is said in the second part of "Faust" is only too true, that if sorrow but breathes upon us, she makes us blind.

The first and most efficacious of these remedies is Work, not merely for its immediate results, but because it busies the

mind and keeps it from useless brooding over things that perhaps never come at all; for a great part of sorrow consists of unfounded fear. Work gives courage, and it gives momentary forgetfulness in a legitimate way, as unwarranted and pernicious "distractions" and drink do not. It is the only true, permissible, and beneficent Lethe-draught of the modern world.

The second means, which can, of course, be used only by those to whom God is a living Personality and not merely an idea, is Prayer—indeed, to pray to God first of all before one speaks with men. Spurgeon says, perhaps truly, that herein lies hidden also the secret of success with men—that is, the art of speaking rightly with men, through whom God then sends help in a practical way. But we do not wish to write a treatise here on prayer. Suffice it to say that, in prayer, faith is necessary on the one hand, and on the other, that the man should turn to God with his whole will, with all his spiritual power concentrated upon a single point. The result, in any case, is power; and, besides the experience of more frequent aid, there follows the conclusion, entirely logical, that if God bestows on man the greatest of life's bless-

ings, he will not refuse him those minor ones also, which serve only for the preservation of life. There would really be no sense in bringing a man so far on his way as to begin to lead an upright life, and then to let him die of hunger. The expression, so often heard, that there are no longer any miracles in these days, is most certainly untrue. No one can bind a living God to "natural laws."

Without doubt, however, it often happens that one must wait for the prayer's fulfilment, must at times, indeed, stand knocking for a long while; or the prayer may never be fulfilled at all. But then, in the first case, perhaps even this waiting is the right answer to the prayer (as, to be sure, one mostly discovers only later); and in the other case, you perhaps receive something better than you yourself had chosen.

A third means, chiefly availing in financial anxieties, is Contentment, pleasure in simple things. From this, the men of our day have wandered far; and, for many, an ever-heightening enjoyment passes for the only true purpose of life, and a certain measure of luxury is regarded as a requirement and a symbol of culture. It will be necessary for men to return once more to

simplicity in their mode of living and to a voluntary renunciation of the philosophy of pleasure, if they are to banish sorrow, and often still worse from their life. Praying for pleasure nothing avails; it is not for the needs of luxury that God is to be had, but for daily bread.

In close relation to contentment stand two other great remedies against sorrow. The first is a wise Frugality. This goes hand in hand, indeed, only with honest acquisition; what is unjustly acquired is seldom wisely saved, and, according to a true proverb, rarely descends to the third heir. In such cases, therefore, frugality is of no use. Frugality can also, in other cases, be actually harmful. Excessive calculation, and anxiety extending to the smallest minutiæ of expenditure, leads to needless care, and almost as many people come to spiritual ruin through this as through heedless improvidence. And so, the blessing (or curse) that rests on the actions of men has a manifest relation to the observance of the moral commandments. If it were not so, it would be truly enigmatical how so many thousands of honest men get through life without property or sure income. They themselves would be least of all in a position to explain it.

There is one more remedy against financial anxiety, and that, strange to say, is systematic Giving. This the ancient prophets of Israel already knew; in our day it has lately assumed prominence again, especially through George Müller and Spurgeon. Whether the amount to be laid aside for this purpose should be the tenth part of one's income would seem a matter of complete indifference; but a definite part it must be; and it should never be allowed to remain a matter of mere intentions, which the natural avarice of men will always find ways of evading. In this way a man oftentimes acquires his first inclination toward caring for his poor fellow-men, while otherwise they appear to him only too often as troublesome claimants for something that rightly belongs to himself alone or that he has need of for himself and for his own. But when a man possesses such a fund, no longer belonging to himself, then he looks around more freely to see where he may put the money to good use; then at times he even anticipates the appeal of the tongue when he sees the mute appeal of the eye. This single habit, universally adopted, would help solve the social question more than all the talking and scribbling with which the

world now resounds, for the most part vainly.

A stoical remedy we will finally name, because, when all the others have first been tried, in most cases it is no longer necessary. It consists in picturing to ourselves the worst that could happen. And, in fact, this does afford a certain consolation, at least for him who is able to make use of it; others, on the contrary, can be led by this path, and without any need for it, to despair.

Nevertheless, all this does not always bring immediate help. The Spirit of Sorrow often falls upon one like an armed man (especially in sleepless nights), and leaves him no time for instant resistance. In that case, the first step is to discover the cause. If it is sin, it must be at once set right. If there is no definite cause present, or if it is of a physical nature, then withstand it by physical remedies, such as sleep, fresh air, exercise, or by work; never by mere "distractions," for afterward the trouble returns with doubled power. Often a good quotation will strengthen, such as: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, these may for-

get; yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

If the cause of sorrow is some trouble actually present, and not one feared in the future, then perhaps the following thought will help: We must bear what God lays upon us; and we must, with all our power of will, hold fast the conviction that nothing can possibly happen without his permission and that all is measured in accord with our strength, whose actual resources we often do not know ourselves. These two thoughts, then, are provisionally our support; whoever gives up this support is like a man who clings to a rope over an abyss and lets go the rope. There is no call to be overstoical; we may give vent to our sorrow, only not at all to ourselves and but sparingly to others; and we should then take some action in accordance with our reason, though not in accordance with that alone,—nor always at once, while it is still troubled with excitement. With these presuppositions, one can endure much.

It is quite possible that at times even this does not seem rightly to avail. In that case, these are the periods of life when

the genuine steel of character is to be formed, that otherwise may not be brought to pass. Then at least make the attempt simply to hold out for a short time longer,—for a month, a week, three days, or even only for a single day. Not rarely at the end of such a term you are stronger than at its beginning, and frequently experience shows it to be the case that from the very moment one is preparing himself for the apparently inevitable and no longer seeks or expects any human aid, at that very moment relief is already coming. The suffering has then just fulfilled its purpose.

In conclusion, only one thing more: we know very well how people, in the hours of their heaviest struggles with sorrow, can lose faith in every ground of consolation and look upon such grounds as unsatisfying, or as the empty talk of people who have themselves suffered nothing like. That may be true, or again it may not. But, in case you think it is, nevertheless try to bear, for the glory of God, what you will and can no longer endure for your own sake or for the sake of those near to you. "When you are driven almost to despair," says Spurgeon, "and

are tempted to lay violent hands upon yourself or to do some other rash and evil deed, do nothing of the kind, but trust yourself to your God; that will bring him more glory than seraphim and cherubim can give. To believe the promise of God, when you are ill, or sad, or near to death—that it is to glorify God." This "giving God the glory," or "praising the Lord," or "hallowing his name," is one of the many expressions of the Bible which have now quite vanished from our real comprehension and have become an empty phrase. To render glory to God on earth and still to live for him though one would otherwise be glad to dispense with life, that is the highest of all life's resignations; and he to whom this duty is finally intrusted is not to make complaint, but to be ashamed if it come to one unwilling to accept it. But if it has come to a man who has something of the heroic in his nature, then by its means he will, for the first time, develop the possibilities that lay dormant within him; and the feeling of a larger and surer nearness to God will then, in the bitterest hours of his life, so lift him above himself that these very hours will seem to his after-memory as the most beautiful—as those, indeed, to which he owes all his real happiness in life.

Sin and sorrow cling close together in human life; therefore they are also displayed here before the reader as an associated hindrance on the way to happiness.

The first step, as a rule, must be to banish sin from life; only then may one seriously think of getting rid of sorrow. For the only true freedom from sorrow lies not in a man's natural disposition, nor is it the product of happy outward surroundings of any sort; true freedom from sorrow is found in that higher happiness, painfully won, to which Job was led, after his earlier happiness, dependent upon fortuitous things, had been done away. To this happiness, henceforth secure, we all without exception should attain and can attain, just as soon as we have fought through the gates at which the guardians Sin and Sorrow stand.

II. "COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE"

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ANY who are distressed over the manifold evils of our time (but do not themselves have to suffer any too keenly under them) comfort themselves and others in the end with a verse from one of the hymns of Paul Gerhardt:

"*The upper hand God holdeth, and maketh all things well.*"

I do not know whether the poet put so strong a stress upon the words "all things" as we are wont to do, but thus much I certainly do know, that Christianity shows scant favor to an optimism of this sort; all things will not be well in the end in spite of human folly and baseness; but, until the consummation of all things human, good and evil, justice and injustice, will continue to exist side by side as Jesus, in the parable of the wheat and the tares, has clearly said once for all.

No, the idealism of Christianity is something quite other than a shallow optimism; it is much rather a strong faith that everything genuinely good, however slight compared to the tremendous power and might

of the forces arrayed against it, never can be crushed by them, but ever maintains itself victorious against its foes. That is the comfort to be given its followers, a comfort that will take from them the fear of losing poise in the midst of the merciless actualities of daily experience; and that is the real meaning of many a Bible word too often explained in the sense of striving after earthly power and splendor; and that, too, is the meaning of some of the finest and most familiar hymns from the fighting days of the Reformation, such as that hymn of Luther, "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never-failing."

On the other hand, the power of what Christianity calls "the world" is very great, and all the elements that make up that power, from the lofty pretension of some distinguished atheistic philosophy all the way down to the basest instinct of the most brutal selfishness, form an extremely close alliance. And the human heart, now overdaring, now overtimid, is so uncertain that even into the life of those who work most effectively for the good, come hours when they despair, not of their task only, but even of their whole manner of thinking, a despair that once and again God must dispel with a "Be not afraid, but speak."

If we look upon life from God's standpoint, instead of our own as we had rather do, we see it is not a matter of purely and simply making his people happy. No, first of all they are to be made fearless, for all right living is a life of battling, not of unruffled peace; but of battling without fear, of warring in a good cause and under sure guidance with that heroism which is the highest of all human qualities and the best of all earthly joys.

This is that never-ending conflict between good and evil which every single human being must fight out in his own life, although the final issue is reached only at the end of all things and in a manner to us unknown. "On the advance post of a man's individual experience the question is the same as in the great battle of the hosts, namely this: whether a faith that is anchored in God is not the highest of moral forces, able to overcome the ever-present power of evil, especially the fundamental sin of self-seeking; for if the victory is gained at the advance post, it may be gained all along the line." Perhaps this is truer than we know, or ever experience on earth. That there is no higher power in the world than comes from association with God, every single

human life must by trial discover. But for that very reason such association must be sought of one's own free will, and of one's own free will always clung to; and that makes the problem of life.

In order to gain, in this warfare, a spirit of joy quite different from the moroseness and half-despair of many Christians, the means closest at hand is this: to try to battle, not according to our own ideas, but, as in military service, punctiliously as commanded. Such means, however, is external; there is an inner basis for the right spirit of joy, without which that joy cannot be enduring, and that inner basis is the abiding of God in the heart. When all opposition to God disappears, then appears the real joy of living and the great consolation he gives on earth. This peace with God, which in time may even grow, as it were, into an enduring and genuine friendship, the human soul must experience, else it shall not know what inward happiness is. And outward happiness is only the easy sequence of the inward; God gladly does nothing but good to men as soon as he finds it possible.

Here, also, lies the real cause of the philosophical atheism that makes up the religion of many excellent people, who

suppose they can not think otherwise, though they would gladly like to. A man's simple logic will tell him that it is not consistent to say one believes in God, and yet not allow God to dwell in him and rule him absolutely; and it is a noble trait of many doubters that they do not dare to serve God with mere phrases, but they see that if once he should be taken up into the account of life, he would be a "consuming fire" for much that exists in their lives, for much that they would be obliged to give up, but do not want to give up. Faith is a matter, not of the reason, but of the human will; and the difficulty lies in just this resolution to serve God, with all its consequences—a resolution the man himself must make, for no divine mercy can wholly take its place.

The principal things a man must surrender, if God is to be able to dwell in him, are pleasure, riches, glory, and reliance upon men. On the other hand, when this renunciation has once been made, more and more there disappear within him, of themselves, fear, anger, unrest, and the tormenting feeling of weakness, all of them the sure inheritance and distinguishing mark of the godless. This is the road, and they who think they can squeeze

around this sharp corner with a few philosophical considerations, or with an occasional cry of "Lord, Lord," will likely be the most deceived at last.

Fear is perhaps the most distressing, the most unworthy, yet the most unavoidable of all human feelings; for life is a battle, and the fear that naturally arises in the presence of battle no man can banish; he can but subdue it by uplifting his point of view. Whether this can be done through the ancient Stoic or the modern Kantian philosophy, we will leave to one side; I have no intention of making any one dissatisfied with these paths. But I do wish to say that there is a surer and shorter path, requiring less education and strength of character, and open, not merely to an aristocracy of philosophical culture, but to every one. If this had not been so, if Christianity had not lifted the poor and the humble up out of the dust, a "gentry morality" would long ago have come into exclusive mastery in the world, as it was in a fair way of doing at the time Christianity was born.

In our day there are two common conceptions of Christianity, both of them overpassing the mark: one of them makes of it a sentimental lamblike bliss that

finds its pleasurable sensations solely "in Christ"; the other considers it a fearful vale of tears, an unending succession of trials and sorrows. But Christianity is not so; its path is really much easier than any other; for it not only demands, it also creates, brave people—brave people who, free from complaining, free from overmuch seeking of even rightful pleasures, free from any cowardly flight from the world, in the very midst of the world hold up unshaken the banner of righteousness and never despair of its victory.

This is the spirit that we most need today; and this is the sure mark of a genuine Christian. If we will, we can be wholly without fear, not only before the forces of nature, which all stand in God's higher power, but also before the cares of daily life, and before men, who may do nothing hostile without God's permission. Firmly to trust in God in all he does or allows, even if one is ill, or troubled, or almost in despair of any good outcome of a matter, that it is to serve God; and in comparison with this, all your other church "services" possess a distinctly subordinate worth. And so Luther, too, himself endowed with this bravery in high degree, says thus: "The reason knows no means of making

the heart contented and trustful, in those times of need when all the good things the world can give shall fail. But when Christ comes, the outward adversities, indeed, he lets remain, but the personality he strengthens; he makes the weak heart unterrified, and the trembling heart he makes bold; and he turns the restless conscience into one that is peaceful and still. And, therefore, such a man is comforted, courageous, and joyous in those very matters in which all the world else stands terrified; that is, in death, in terror for sin, and in all the times of need when the world can no longer help with its good things and its consolations. Then there will be a real and lasting peace, ever enduring and invincible so long as the heart shall hold to Christ."

Then add to this that God is faithful and lets no one be tried beyond his strength; yes, even before the greatest of physical and moral dangers he often holds his hands over our eyes, so that we see them only when past.

To be sure, all this is inconceivable to those who have not themselves experienced in evil days that even in misfortune's blackest hour a calm, bright, yes, even blithe spirit can yet abide deep within the

heart inclined to God; and men of such experience, therefore, often endure incredible things, and then, at the slightest gleam of the sun, quickly again lift themselves up anew, bodily and spiritually strengthened from within; while other men are submerged in the waters.

It can not be denied, however, that we learn a right courage only by degrees and in days of sorrow; and it is generally only through such days that we attain to the right conception of life and grow into a larger mould. So true is this that perhaps no human being of any real worth has ever yet gone through life without many sorrows, sorrows that the Scriptures often and quite rightly compare to a refining fire that can be made thoroughly hot only when there is much precious metal present; but then it brings all the gold within a man to light. He who is not willing to suffer renounces the greatest gifts of God, and rests satisfied with smaller things, needlessly: for even in the greatest trouble he has no need to fear; so long as he does fear, there is still within him something wrong that must out.

With fear, anger also disappears; and anger in most cases is only fear in disguise. The angry are not courageous, they are afraid; you may nearly always count upon

that with entire certainty. For example, the restless zealots and agitators who think their mission is to save Christianity from its death-bed through the might of their zeal and hate—such "wrathful saints" are but a kindred variety with those timid, sweetish people who are forever accommodating themselves to things, particularly to things that are grand and aristocratic; for the demeanor of both these classes springs from the one same source, their fear.

But what most distresses men, often even those who are well advanced on the road of the Christian life, is the feeling of a constantly recurring weakness such as we know from the epistles of the bravest of all the apostles, and such as each one of us indeed knows from his own experience; with this almost universal singularity, that such spells of weakness are often wont to come on when quite unlooked for, and sometimes just after the best days of the inner life; and then they can bow down the soul to a genuine despair.

As to this, the first thing to say, for the comfort of those thus bowed down, is that whatever is strong and powerful in the world always bears within it I know not what of rough and undivine. This we

may ourselves observe in the case of men of exuberant force ; involuntarily, we never have, concerning them, the feeling that they especially please God. Christianity, we may be sure, is in no way planned upon the model of such giants and demi-gods.

Besides, it is not hard to perceive the educative purpose in this feeling of weakness. Pride and its sister vanity can be torn out, root and branch, only after a long-unbroken succession of hard buffetings has issued in a deep and lasting humility. Through this purgatory, from end to end, the proud and the vain must pass at some time in their lives, if anything is to be made of them. For "though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly ; but the proud he knoweth afar off;" to the proud he assuredly never comes nigh. If, then, this sense of weakness is concerned with spiritual growth itself, there is surely no reason that we should be disheartened. Rather, it is a consolation, in such inner doubts over the weakness of our faith, that when the Galatians had slipped back into an unspiritual and petty conception of religion, the Apostle Paul could, nevertheless, assure them, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." So long as one's

faith has not entirely ceased, this time of weakness is only a transient phase, and often bears more fruit than more resplendent days do. And finally, the weakness may actually become a source of strength ; the feeling of one's own power, flattering as it may be to one's pride, is rather a hindrance than a furtherance in the path of true inner progress, and the most courageous men are not they who have the greatest confidence in themselves, but they who have sure recourse to a power that far transcends all powers.

When once this inward courage finds place in a well-tried man, then an unassailable peace and joy, as the Scriptures promise, enter into the soul till now often tossed by the waves of anguish and at times indeed entirely bereft of hope. But henceforth it "shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

A good life, quite purged of dross, is surely the highest of all things attainable ; yet, to those who are "comforted," it is just this that springs from an existence full, indeed, of ever-changing joys and sorrows, but where no joy estranges one from God and no sorrow any longer breeds impatience, for both joy and sor-

row are received from the same hand, as are the sunshine and the rain; and thankfully, for both are inseparable elements in life. And their lives henceforth bear blessing to others.

But, as far as compatible with the true well-being of a man guided by God, his outward happiness also is far higher, and stands upon a surer basis than is possible in any other conception of life. Yes, for such a man all things again and again work together for good, even when he has suffered seeming failure.

Such are the asseverations of the Bible; and are we to think that they were meant only for the human beings of an age long vanished? Or may we also apply them to our own use still to-day? Surely we may, if the God of that day is still the God of this; and that is but a matter of test.

And we may hope it will, more commonly than hitherto, be put to the test again, when all other attempts to regain a calm contentment and a cheerful, healthy spirit of labor have suffered wreck, and when a nervous humanity longs for real tranquillity again, and craves some better bulwark against the increasing weariness of existence than a merely materialistic conception of life affords. Then will reli-

gion—and without any external compelling Authority, which can never again in any manner be reëstablished—then will religion regain anew its place in the life of the nations; whereas, now, it has often become nothing but a pleasant play upon the feelings of leisurely or (in a worldly sense) happy people, while to such as really need it to deliver them in distress and sorrow, it is, through prejudice, closed.

Many of these latter, however, and perhaps at no very distant day, will come to these old water-springs, now all but choked with rubbish; though such an idea is far enough from their thoughts as yet. But, wheresoever they may have tried, nowhere else can they still their thirst for a tranquil philosophy of life. For what the old chronicler said of Israel is true to-day: "The days will arise when there shall be no true God, no law, and no priest to show the way; and in those times there shall be no peace to him that goes out, nor to him that comes in; for there will be great vexations upon all the inhabitants of the earth; nation will break nation, and city city, and God will vex them with all adversity."

But as for you, you who find yourself upon the sure path of salvation and peace, "be comforted, be strong, let not your hands be slack: for your work shall be rewarded."

III. ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF MEN

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ERHAPS no one has ever seriously doubted that the ability to know and to pass an accurate judgment on men closely concerns our practical life; but whether a knowledge of human nature brings much happiness is a question on which opinions have always differed. While some declare that we really love men only so long as we do not know them, others (like the duke in Goethe's "Tasso") believe that it is only so long as we do not know men that we stand in fear of them; yet Goethe himself seems partly to retreat from this conception in another expression of his, where he says that while nothing is more interesting, indeed, than to learn to know men, yet one must take care not to know oneself.

For our part, we believe at the outset that all knowledge of human nature, even one's own, can be but superficial, and that the real depths of the soul, and especially the limits of its possibilities for good and evil, God alone can fully know. But besides this, strange as it may sound at first, the

knowledge of men rests upon a basis of pessimism joined with a considerable degree of love for human kind. If any one looks upon humanity as something great and superior (not so much in promise as in actual performance), he will, if he have some measure of wisdom, find himself in the end disillusioned by his life experiences. On the other hand, it is just as much a matter of experience, with those who have known mankind most perfectly, that they (Christ himself at the head) have always been friends to humanity; for though they do not look upon man as quite free and nobly born, yet they believe him destined to freedom and nobility of life. This gives them their power to love him, in spite of his faults; yes, we may go so far as to say, on account of his faults, just for the reason that love, in this world at least, feels within it an impelling necessity to pity, to save, to do good.

To understand men, therefore, we must first make sure that we love them, and we must be, to a very considerable degree, independent of them so far as our necessities go; for there must be as great an absence of self-interest as possible on our part. Whoever desires to get much out of men for his own advantage will al-

ways be blinded by his interests, and whoever finds men necessary to himself will always fear them. But the man who wishes to do something for them rather than receive something from them, can alone really learn to know what they are, and can tolerate that knowledge, even in its worst features, without hating men; every one else, who is not a weakling, easily falls into such a hatred of human kind. A thorough judge of men, without love, would in fact be intolerable; the aversion against such persons, who assert they are judges of men but who are at the same time haters of men, is a very natural one, for it is based on a law of self-defence. And so, you are not to use your knowledge of human nature as something on which to construct the edifice of your own happiness; but it is only in order that you may be the better able to further the happiness of others that you are to desire to learn how rightly to judge them. If you have any other purpose, you will never come to any considerable attainments in this art.

The first step in the knowledge of human nature, so far as it is at all attainable, is (quite contrary to Goethe's view)

self-knowledge and self-improvement; the second step is the resolve to learn to know men for their sake and not one's own. But even so, we are not to expect a perfect knowledge of so complicated a being as man; he does not even succeed in understanding himself, or at the best gets only a partial insight late in life; and then, too, no one individual is quite like another. Rather, we must content ourselves with a certain number of the results of experience; some of these we will try, later on, to set before the reader.

The real secret of knowing human nature lies in possessing a pure heart innocent of self-conceit; such people gradually acquire a keenness of vision that pierces all the outer wrappings. The difficulty of understanding men does not spring from the subtleties of a science of "psychology," but only from the difficulty of forgetting one's own self. We do not get to know men from whom we have something to hope or to fear.

Even the prophetic gift is nothing else than a direct, intense insight into human affairs,—their causes and effects. Such power resides in every man who in large measure has set himself free from himself.

But self-seeking is like a veil of mist to hinder this power of vision, which would otherwise be present.

An intercourse with men that rests upon a correct judgment of them is therefore learned, not so much by frequent association with the men themselves (as many believe), as through fellowship with God. If we have this, then for the first time we begin to look upon men, both the good and the evil, more with the just eyes of God; while, without trust in Him, we must always rely more or less on men and so suffer the disillusionments that will always follow.

In men, especially of the better sort, there is furthermore a necessity that they shall worship something. Those who are not able to worship anything transcendental throw a halo of fancy about certain men, and in this self-deception not only lose all ability really to understand men, but also work harm to those they reverence—if these are yet living and are themselves poor judges of men. Wherever belief in God is lacking, hero-worship, with all its detriments to the inner and outer freedom of humanity, is unavoidable.

Every one can test this for himself.

Whenever he finds himself fully at peace with God, he at once becomes more indifferent toward men in that very particular in which men are ordinarily most valued; for he no longer cares for them for the sake of gaining some advantage. Indeed, if the desire of conferring advantage upon them did not remain, he feels that he could easily do without them altogether. For this reason all ancient and mediæval monachism, as well as all modern pessimism, are always somewhat suspicious in motive; for back of them lurks, for the most part, either chagrin at not receiving, or disinclination to give. Others, too, feel that this is so and are therefore, on the whole, none too well disposed to men who thus hold aloof.

For there is nothing that men have a more instinctive discernment and a greater aversion for than for self-seeking. Even the simplest, even little children, yes, even animals, quickly find the selfish out, in spite of all the pretence with which they surround themselves. Whoever would acquire a strong influence over men must give up thoughts of self-advantage. That is the surest way. For this reason children often like grandparents more than parents, because they feel that in their

love is less of self; the parents are too much wrapped up in their own concerns. Even the worst pessimists seek love, and no egotist is earnest at bottom in his praise of egotism. But they despair of men's ability to be other than selfish, and they may be taught otherwise only by repeated deeds; the mere phrases of love have long been familiar to them, and they estimate them at about their correct value. It does no good, therefore, to speak to them much of love; that will only be misunderstood. At the most, speak of friendliness and public benevolence; it seems to be less, yet is really more.

This spirit, then, is absolutely necessary if you would live in the world without disgust at it; therefore acquire this spirit at any cost.

To understand the nature of any individual it is important to know his derivation. Women in especial follow, almost without exception, the character of their family, sons as a rule that of the mother or the mother's father, daughters oftener the paternal side. The proverb that "the apple falls not far from its stem" indicates, therefore, a strong presumption. Only, we often do not know the derivation suffi-

ciently well, and besides, with God's mercy, a man can even break away from a bad ancestry. As a matter of fact, there are no "hereditary encumbrances" that can not be shaken off by God's mercy and man's will. The assumption of such an unalterable fate is one of the greatest sacrileges a man can make himself guilty of. On the other hand, in the same limited sense, a certain aristocratic tendency is warranted. Noteworthy individual characteristics, such as courage, proper self-confidence, a natural fearlessness of men, fineness of taste in all the matters of life, do not develop, as a rule, in the first generation after breaking the yoke of slavery and oppression; for these are largely transmitted qualities. For this reason the great pioneers of political and spiritual freedom rarely spring from the lowest stratum of the people, but from a middle stratum already trained in these things, or even, often enough, from aristocracy itself. It is, therefore, a great misfortune, almost a transgression against one's posterity, when a highly cultured man marries below his plane of culture; for thus he takes a step back again.

In this connection, there is due to oneself and to others a certain right which

parents and teachers often forget. No one can easily change his whole natural disposition; one can much more easily bring that disposition to a higher perfection in its own kind. That is to say, the phlegmatic man can attain to the noble calm of wisdom, the sanguine man to a self-sacrificing activity for others, the choleric man to a strong championship for whatever is great. A false estimate of this natural temperament, or attempts to break it, usually lead to deplorable half-results, where something complete might have been attained.

We rightly learn to understand people only in their activities, the men at their work, the women in their house affairs; best in their difficulties and sorrows, least in social intercourse, especially at hotels and summer resorts. The acquaintances made there often turn out disappointing afterward. It is, generally speaking, an unwholesome feature of human intercourse nowadays. People become acquainted with one another, and yet not acquainted, when they live and eat together day after day. One can not keep aloof altogether without appearing supercilious, and one can not be too intimate without the risk

of making connections that would otherwise have been avoided.

It is easiest to know people by what they regard as their real aim in life; if this aim is power or pleasure, they are not wholly to be trusted.

In his later years, the outlines of a man's character ordinarily come out much more clearly than in his earlier. Real piety reveals itself in the patient bearing of the manifold burdens of age, fictitious piety in impatience and in a religion that becomes more and more formal. Avarice, envy, covetousness, anger, the love of honor and praise, and even, at times, the desire of secret, sensual pleasure, come with elementary, unmistakable force to light as the ruling passions of life; and the man pronounces his own judgment in the sight of his fellows. Rarely does any one, like Augustus, carry a rôle through to the end, and even this great actor was not successful. On the other hand, no one can read Cromwell's last prayer and think him a hypocrite, unless he is one himself.

And finally, sorrows play their part in revealing human nature. In any great sorrow the thoughts of men are disclosed.

Envy comes to light to rejoice; generosity, to help; and indifference, to pass by on the other side. Whoever has had no thorough experience of this in person, does not know men. In the first part of life, when experience is still small, the greatest danger in one's attitude to men is that of considering them of too much importance; in the second, that of becoming too indifferent to them.

There is yet another and quite different source of the knowledge of human nature, but a source not to be desired for any one not already acquainted with it; I mean the power possessed by the nervously disordered. In such cases there is a very clear physical intuition as to the kind of nature there is in other people, of whom the one may have as quieting and refreshing an influence upon the sick man as clear, cool water, while the other only excites and frets. Such is the knowledge of men the Bible ascribes to those "possessed of evil spirits." But these are diseased conditions which ought not to be, and which should not be needlessly meddled with.

Experience has established some of the following principles in the art of reading men:

As with courtesy, so it is with a man's probity ; if it is genuine, it shows itself in his conduct in the small things. Probity in small matters springs from a moral foundation, while probity on the large scale is often only habit or prudence and gives no clew as to a man's real character.

Vanity and the lust for honors are always a bad symptom, for both rest at bottom upon a self-condemnation which tries to supply the missing inner contentment by outward show or the approving judgment of others. Thoroughgoing pessimists are always vain. By their pessimism they give us to understand more or less clearly that they themselves would really be an exception to this base human rabble if they could count on understanding their nature.

An overmodest nature, especially if given to self-irony, is never to be trusted ; in most cases a strong dose of vanity and the love of praise hides behind. Truly modest men usually speak neither good nor bad of themselves, and do not want people to concern themselves about them. Vain persons, on the other hand, by the apparently modest method of self-depreciation, often seek to draw attention to themselves, or to catch out-and-out compliments.

A kind-hearted readiness to help is the sure sign of a good character, while cruelty to animals and ridicule of men is a sure sign of a bad character.

One of the best tests of real kind-heartedness is the conduct of men in the presence of long-persisting or altogether hopeless misfortune: those who possess but little of that quality grow weary and soon abandon the unfortunate one to his fate, perhaps with the fine sentiment, "one must leave him alone with his God"; others, who with a true sympathy persevere, stand the highest test of the unselfish love of humanity. Such are ordinarily simple, poor people, while the cultured and the rich far more rarely show themselves equal to the test. This natural nobility of character, the most valuable of all the natural endowments of men, is far more generally found in the lower classes, and the "noblest of the nations" are to be sought elsewhere than where we are wont, in the usual manner of speaking, to assume them to be.

The basest human characteristic is innate faithlessness. When this is present, all the other so-called good qualities do not countervail; they but make the man the

more dangerous, while faithfulness makes some expiation for the worst failings.

A sure mark of an essentially mean man is ingratitude. It sets him below the nobler animals, all of which are grateful. An especially hateful form of ingratitude is that which, in order to escape the necessity of showing gratitude, treats the acceptance of benefits as a favor shown by the receiver and therefore an honor conferred upon the giver for which he must feel under obligation. Benefits received generally make only the noble-minded thankful. Others as soon as possible seek a pretext to avoid this feeling, to them oppressive. The paying back of borrowed money, particularly, is regarded as a merit on their part for which the creditor owes them life-long gratitude.

In the correct estimation of men, the most important consideration is the caliber they possess. But caliber can not be given a man even by the best of education and the highest of culture. Caliber is a gift of nature; a baby cat will never become a lion, similar as they may at first appear to be. The caliber present in a man can be but enlarged, not changed, through the great happenings of life, through severe

sorrows, or through a very good environment, particularly if one have faithful and very well-disposed friends, or if one make the right marriage. We must, therefore, be careful not to wrong men by rating them too high and so requiring too much of them; it is not in their power to do it, but after their fashion, perhaps, they may be good, faithful men, on whom we may count for something, and who often accomplish more than they would if they imagined themselves to be of more consequence than they are.

We must never seek for an intimate personal knowledge of the people to whom we want to surrender ourselves unconditionally, or to whom we intend to remain unconditionally hostile; for in both instances we shall become easily disconcerted by finding characteristics in them which will contradict our preconceived opinions. For a like reason, one ought to learn to know one's enemies in person, and on the other hand, not to see one's friends too often.

A man's reputation is not absolutely determinative in forming an estimate of him. Men of note, especially, are often different from what we had fancied them

to be. On the whole, however, the public judgment passed on a man seldom goes altogether astray and is a very important factor in making up our estimate. In particular, there is no such thing as a complete misappreciation of a good man all his life through. The public judgment as to men who are much exposed to such judgment is generally subject, indeed, to continual fluctuation, like the surface of water, but it, nevertheless, has the tendency (not to be deflected) of ever returning again to its proper level. In the case of all good men, we can count on their having an aristocratic nature. Democracy is correct, as a political conviction, but as an ingrained characteristic it has no worth.

Men who are fundamentally good we learn best to know in their time of trouble, for then the possibilities that lie within them come more clearly to light; but men of mediocre worth we learn best to know in their time of prosperity and by their manner of enjoying pleasures.

All who hate men on principle are themselves egotists. On the other hand, it is certainly a matter of experience that we do have disillusionments even as to the best men, and as to educated people

even more than simple folk. As a general thing, one should not put absolute trust in men, and the best and most trustworthy friendships are those which have either sprung from a previous enmity, or have been once (but not twice) broken off. For then alone does one see the shadow side of his friend, and so can henceforth discount it. On the other hand, a frequent vacillation between friendship and hostility is a mark of a weak character.

That we learn to know our real friends only in time of need, and that we should quietly let those go who are then unfaithful, is a truth almost too trifling to be once more expressed.

Why it is that, when misfortune comes, we suddenly possess friends so startlingly few, is to be explained psychologically thus: the less generous natures are afraid they will be obliged to give actual help, while the more generous often think they see the impossibility of rendering any help at all and are ashamed, wrongly, to offer only sympathy. In many cases even very well-wishing men fall into the mistake of Job's friends and involuntarily assume that every misfortune is more or less one's own fault, so that pity must be tempered by censure and admonitions. Then the more

thoughtless ones speak out their mind, while men of finer feelings rather draw back, so as not to be obliged to do it.

And all this is still oftener true in the case of relatives.

To be envied is a very disagreeable thing to have accompany one through life, and it usually ceases only toward life's end. But it is, for all persons of real consequence, a very necessary protection against too great a veneration on the part of others. Such veneration would do much more harm if it were unmixed with envy. And it is generally of little value. A dram of real friendship is worth much more than a whole wagon-load of veneration.

One great rule for finding out men is this: give yourself out to be frankly just what you are; above all, frankly hate wrong things on principle, and let no opportunity of showing it pass by. Then men will show their own cards more openly to you. Public personages, in particular, must in their whole life be clear as glass and transparent as crystal, so that men may see everything without reserve.

In general, as to good qualities, men like best to speak of those they do not

possess; while, as to evil qualities, the proverb speaks truly: "With what the heart is full, with that the mouth runs over." People who take pleasure in speaking often of impure things and the dangers of the world in this regard, although they may do so with the most earnest show of disapprobation, always feel a strong secret inclination thereto. Others, whose every third word is "benevolence" and "good works," have to struggle with a disposition toward avarice or covetousness. The worst are those who are forever talking of "uprightness" and "loyalty."

Most fanatics for some specialty have become such because they knew very well in the beginning that without such a heightening of their feeling they would not persevere in it. In most cases, therefore, they are not wholly sincere.

It is one of the best signs for a man if humble people feel confidence and goodwill toward him — little children, above all, but also simple-hearted poor folks, and even animals. The man whom children and animals can not endure is not to be trusted. Women, too, are good judges — that is, if they themselves are good; otherwise they are just the opposite. To be

much with unpretending people contributes greatly to one's contentment with life. All great pessimists have despised them, yet have found no satisfaction in the people of more importance whose companionship they have sought.

Pessimism and the detestation of one's fellow-men, when displayed by young people, point (if they are not merely talking for effect) to irregular habits of living. But they who keep their youth clean have a source of unfailing delight in life.

We are not upright because men praise us; we are upright if we receive the praise of God. Any one who has ever experienced this will also know that, however unreliable and cheap the praise of men may be, it always makes us a little proud and leads us away from the truth, but the praise of God never has any such result. Of pious people who are proud the assertion can quite safely be made that God has never praised them; they praise themselves and let others praise them.

Pride is always mixed with a portion of stupidity. Vanity makes us ridiculous to people, but not odious; pride, on the other hand, so works upon others as to call out defiance mingled with contempt.

As the proverb says, pride always goes immediately before a fall. When a man becomes proud, he has lost his game, and it may be safely counted on that he is approaching a downfall. As soon as God forsakes us, our own heart is lifted up.

On the other hand, the faults which have become clear to ourselves and which have bred humility within us are often not so very perceptible to others. They no longer put themselves so noticeably in evidence as do the faults we will not or can not yet see. This is the first striking reward of battling against oneself.

Every one stands in need of straightforward but kindly criticism. This is the reason progress is made by the simple people who, when they make a mistake, are censured and admonished by everybody, without any beating around the bush; while people of higher standing, after their school years are over, seldom have the advantage of being judiciously censured. Even their critics often only wish to show them how important and indispensable they are to them, and attack some minor defect of little moment one way or the other.

It is an important thing to acquire the art of speaking of one's own doings in a quiet and matter-of-fact manner, if, indeed, they have to be spoken of at all. It usually happens that some men show themselves too vain of their accomplishments, and thereby arouse open or secret opposition; while others speak of them with a certain off-hand disparagement, as much as to say that they have plenty more in stock. It is the best way to speak of one's performances as little as possible, and, in any case, never to introduce the subject oneself. Vanity is always recognized, even by the simplest. The only sure means of not passing for a vain man is—not to be vain.

If a young man is forward or even only very confident, if there is not a little of shyness about him, he has a defective character and little real merit; or at least he has ripened very early and will develop no further. The widespread prepossession that, without plenty of assurance, one can not get through the world is incorrect, unless one is thinking of momentary success.

A very suspicious, at any rate imprudent, propensity of many people is that of being the bearers of bad news. The

motives, indeed, may be very different; but in most cases there is mingled with it a kind of self-elevation which takes pleasure in seeing others deeply shaken and humbled, an ungenerous feeling that often comes very near to being malice. This is instinctively felt on the other side, and something of the unpleasant remembrance is ever afterward associated with the one who caused it.

Those persons are of no worth who have never been broken by a great sorrow or by a thorough humiliation of their self-esteem. They retain something small, or arrogantly self-righteous, or unkind about them which, in spite of their probity (which they ordinarily think a great deal of), makes them disagreeable to God and man.

One must always be on one's guard before people who do not have a kindly nature. A natural disposition to maliciousness is very hard to be overcome. It shows itself most easily in a tendency to making sport of others.

It is an uncommonly pleasant thing, on the other hand, to have to do with people who make their fellow-men feel comfortable in their presence, who are always even-

tempered, always friendly and ready to help, never nervously unquiet or intrusive, rejoicing in the welfare of others, sympathetic and consolatory in trouble. This does not necessitate a clever mind; on the contrary, the very clever people often lack just this quality, which, for the first time, would make all their other qualities really useful and valuable.

At ordinary times it is very difficult to recognize real bravery. Yet there is one unfailing sign. Brave people never enter a fight with arrogance and are less afraid after a defeat than after a victory, since every victory works some injustice to the opposing side; while cowards show themselves arrogant after every victory. As to this characteristic, a man best learns to know himself in his dreams. There he sees himself as he is, being beyond the control of a better will that does not depend upon merely physical and mental emotions.

A crafty shrewdness always lowers a man in our regard. We think of the possibility of its being used against us. Therefore, as a proverb says, "all foxes come to be skinned at last." No one likes them, and in the long run they lose their game.

Every man should perfect his own national type. When a man no longer knows to which nation he belongs, he becomes an unedifying phenomenon. Therefore dwellers on the border are often vacillating in their nature, and polyglot speech is, as a rule, a mark neither of genius nor of character. The most questionable people are those who mingle different languages in a single sentence and who lack education besides.

Not very much, on the whole, is to be learned from the external features of a man; the science of physiognomy is a deceptive one, generally speaking. Yet a strong development of the lower part of the face as contrasted with the upper, an insignificant chin, expressionless eyes, an ever uneasy glance of the eye, and a habit of speaking very loud in the case of women, portend nothing favorable. Happily, these latter are never able to imitate the expression of innocence.

The wide diffusion of photography has been very injurious for the knowledge of human nature, since they usually make the photograph a deceptive portrait, and one who sees it is, therefore, favorably prepossessed.

As to human efficiency, it mostly depends upon a certain confidence a man has with his contemporaries. God alone can give this, and, as a rule, it appears late, in the case of men of real note. All the stones must first be rejected by the builders before they can become the head of the corner. This is the only right course for a man's life to take, and no sort of exertion can supply its place.

With men of original qualities one usually goes through three stages of acquaintanceship. In the first stage, they please one absolutely; in the second, they rather repel, on account of the angularities and singularities of all sorts in their nature; in the third, however, the whole man again pleases. But in the case of more ordinary men, one's first impression is slight, the second is often better, on account of various good individual qualities, but the final impression, again, is unsatisfying. Take it all in all, one may perhaps say that the first impression one has of a man, provided one is himself quite unprejudiced, is the right one.

Hardest of all it is to read human nature from the point of view of religion.

It is easiest to do so along the lines of the first epistle of John, the first six verses of the fourth chapter, and the first five verses of the fifth chapter. But, along with this, we must not exclude a certain human excellence which rests upon philosophical culture, or upon great sagacity and experience of life. All piety must make one more friendly, or it is not genuine.

Who are to be preferred, the nice people who are not religious, or the religious people (and there are really such) who are not (at least not always) nice? I am afraid this is the point where our view does not always coincide with God's. (Luke v. 32.)

To do things on generous lines often seems, especially to the man still young, easier than to do things along the lines of duty. Well, then, do so at first. But when you can once do the one, then you must learn to do the other also, else your life remains beautiful—but incomplete.

The visitation of sins unto the third and fourth generation may be regarded from this point of view: that for so long a period God is yet laboring with these generations. The worst that can happen to men is not this visitation, but that God may leave them henceforth quite to their

own way and will. For the wicked, visitation is, therefore, always a tender of amnesty, but lasting good fortune means rejection.

A temperament always equable, somewhat cool but not selfish, and sympathetic and friendly to every one, is perhaps the happiest if one wishes to be generally liked. Such men pass for especially amiable people and are universally esteemed, without their often contributing anything important and solid to the advance of the world. There are actually people, therefore, who assume this manner from policy. But whether these amiable people have not, after all, buried their talent, is another question.

That intercourse with men which is the art of life is necessarily based, if it is to be brought under rational rules at all, upon a correct knowledge of men. For whoever voluntarily seeks the companionship of men whom he knows to be bad or false is, with all his knowledge of human nature, a fool and a suicide besides. In this point we have departed widely from the conceptions of our grandfathers; human intercourse has to-day become much less sen-

timental and much more serious than a hundred years ago. In this matter the ever-recurring question whether the men are by nature good or bad is beside the mark. As a matter of fact, men have the disposition to be both, and it is our concern, therefore, as Paul says, not to be overcome of the evil we can not avoid meeting, but to overcome evil with good.

If one does not always keep this before his eyes as a fundamental rule of life, then all intercourse with the bad and weak (which is never to be wholly evaded) will be, for men of the better sort, an evil that may lead at last to a contempt for humanity and a desire for isolation, or else to an indifference toward all true principles. Here, also, there are a number of maxims taught by experience, whose observation will make one's intercourse with men at least more easy. They are as follows:

One gets into the best relations with men, on the whole, if he feels a simple, natural, sincere friendliness toward every one he meets, in much the same manner as unspoiled children do before they have experienced the meanness of men. This manner, after many painful experiences, can be again acquired,—at least at a cer-

tain period in later life which may then be called, in this good sense, a second childhood. When one has this attitude, it may even happen that he treats evil men as if good, as they could be if they would, and as, in their better moments, they would really like to be. And the result is that these men forget their evil nature for a time and feel better and happier. That, and not "the destruction of the wicked," is a true man's greatest victory in this world.

At the same time it must not be forgotten that one should not put too great stress upon a man's behavior at the moment; for every one can tell from his own experience how easily our moods alter, and how changeable and uncertain our judgments of others are, so long as the heart has not yet become constant in kindness.

All lasting human relationships rest upon reciprocity. We must never be willing only to receive, nor must we ever be willing only to give; that always ends in dissatisfaction.

The opportunity of rendering great favors to men is not very frequent. On the other hand, one can quietly do any

one some small pleasure, though it be nothing more than a friendly greeting to light up, like a sunbeam, some lonely and joyless existence. We should not begin a day of our life without proposing to ourselves to make use of every opportunity in this way. This friendliness is merely a matter of habit that even men essentially kind-hearted now and then do not have, to their great loss.

Quite ordinary natures, of course, understand only fear, not love. As soon as they no longer fear, they become forward and intractable. For these the proverb holds good: "Be always kind, yet not too kindly; else the wolves will quickly grow bold." For others, however, the proverb is not true. On the other hand, real kindness is the ripest fruit of a well-lived life.

Many men, by doing things in a large style, wish to compel their fellow-men to recognize it. But they seldom succeed, since the other man marks this purpose; and after all, egotism (though of a somewhat different kind than usual) hides behind. They would attain their goal far better if they paid less heed to outward show and did things more quietly.

Many people who are really good-

hearted at bottom have a way of always finding something to blame or demur to even in matters that fall in with their wishes. Thus they bring it about that other persons, hearing only their "No, no," prefer the company of more easy-going, if also more unprincipled, people of the world. Nor should one always be contradicting men, even where they are in the wrong; silence often accomplishes more and does not embitter. Now and then their assertions are not wholly in earnest, but if they experience opposition, then they become fortified in their notions and say something that they can no longer retract. But if one ought to contradict for the truth's sake, then a single contradiction is enough; when opinions are once acknowledged and firmly fixed, continued disputation about them is entirely fruitless.

"Whoever wishes to have his opinion find approval should express it coldly and without passion," says Schopenhauer, if I am not mistaken. The word "coldly" is somewhat too strong; but to *parler sans accent*, that is, to speak in the positive and not always in the superlative degree, is a good custom.

Of one's neighbor one should—so St.

Maddalena dei Pazzi tells us — "speak as little as possible, for one begins with good things, but usually ends up with bad things. Our neighbor is a glass that easily breaks if we take it into our hands too often."

It is a great art in human intercourse to be able to show friendly opposition on occasion. We should, among other things, give our reasons—not merely for convenience simply say No, but try to convince the other with good arguments rather than be dictatorial. All men see, in such an appeal to their understanding, a proof of respect which gratifies them and often quite reconciles them to the negative outcome.

A suspension of judgment is often very useful. With a "We will consider it," or "Let us think it over," good-will is shown for the time being, while the decision is put off; and with that, often enough, the whole matter is discharged. The other man will in the mean time change his mind; or the matter will seem to him of less importance; while, at the moment, his desire was his very kingdom of heaven.

But all this does not apply in things

indubitably wrong. Then we must not give rise to the conception that we might finally be able to come to an agreement in the matter or regard it as at least feasible; but on the contrary, we must "resist the beginnings."

The most unfortunate method of all is to yield in an unfriendly spirit; by so doing we lose the game twice over. But with weak men this is the usual course; they wish to hide their weakness by a little blustering and scolding.

In matters of indifference (and they are infinitely many), we must always do the will of others; that makes living easy and brings good friends without any attending difficulties.

With dependent people it is best to be short, but always friendly and good-mannered, if they themselves know their place; otherwise "*parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.*"

It is always difficult to know how to conduct oneself rightly toward very wealthy or very distinguished people; for to be with them means either a kind of dependent relationship, or a constant watchfulness against receiving favors that is inconsistent with real friendship. Real friendship

gladly gives and gladly receives, without keeping any account. Besides, wealth and distinction very often make men insensible to life's true riches, and limit them in their views of men and life.

It is not pleasant to have to do with people who do not think out their own problems, but are always seeking advice and never following it. One should especially avoid lightly advising one to marry or not to marry, nor should one ever express his opinion to authors about their yet unpublished works. It is very hard, too, to fellowship with those who are "persecuted by fate," and have no conception of their own failings. Christ himself on one occasion curtly dismissed such a man, who wished to make him a "judge and a divider."

Those who are always reflecting over themselves or others, likewise make companions in whom is no reliance nor peace. They are always vain, besides weak and forever vacillating in their judgment of others, as well as in their estimation of themselves. They love no one, not always themselves even, and are loved by no one. Shun them.

Against naïvely shameless people there are three kinds of self-defence: roughness, which, however, is somewhat lowering; coldness, which is not human and leaves a reproach on the conscience; and humor. The last alone shows true superiority.

Selfish men who have quite lost the sense of shame have a way, when they want something of another man, of insinuating to him that it will be for his own advantage, so that they may be exempt from showing gratitude or from resting under any other obligation in return. This is something one must not, even tacitly, ignore, but first set the matter quietly upon its proper footing, if he intends to respond to the request.

Should one always give to those who beg? I believe, generally speaking, yes; the commands of Christianity in this regard are too positive; in most cases the question is rather "How much?" and this depends upon the good-will of the giver. One should at least turn beggars away in a friendly spirit; a kind word is also a gift and many a time of more real value than a small bit of money. But that is something to be learnt, and is really a very great art.

To give cheerfully is, on the other hand, partly a habit. Children ought to be accustomed to it from childhood, instead of being one-sidedly trained to mere frugality, as more commonly happens. They should be frugal as regards themselves, but not as regards others.

An outward expedient is to carry no purse; it is easier to thrust the hand into the pocket than to open a purse.

Very much that is not the proper thing in human intercourse springs from simple inertness toward the good, or from a desire for personal comfort.

Many men, whom everybody knows by sight and praises, are quiet and tolerably dutiful — egotists, — whose ways one must not follow.

The really noble men, the aristocracy of the spirit as opposed to this mere bourgeoisie, have always, on the other hand, found enemies.

Perhaps the most useful, though by no means the pleasantest, intercourse is with our enemies; not only because they are often future friends, but especially because we receive from them, more than from any other, a candid disclosure as to our own faults and a strong impulse to amend

them; because, too, they possess, on the whole, the truest judgment as to the weak points of a man's nature. Finally, we also learn, simply by living under their sharp eyes, how to know and practise the important virtues of self-control, of a strict love for the right, and of a constant attention to oneself.

That is, therefore, a foolish expression (which is often used with intent to praise) when it is said of a man, perhaps in an obituary notice, that "he had no enemies." A man of the right sort does not go through life without making enemies; but it is a fine thing, of course, if at the end of his life he no longer has any.

By this I do not mean to imply that this intercourse with enemies is an easy matter; on the contrary, it belongs to the most difficult tasks of a rightly conducted life. It is particularly hard to endure a long series of injustices which seem to have success on their side. Here comes the need of faith in a just God, who can employ even the wicked as his instruments, but can hold them so firmly in hand that they may go no farther than he wills. Otherwise we should not go through these things without harm. Surely no one who has learned to know himself

will make the assertion that he is already a past-master in this art.

Trust in God is the first essential; after that, the best means for acquiring this art is seriously to resolve that we will, as much as possible, avoid useless anger, and take care not to judge our opponents unjustly; and in any case never to allow real hatred to settle in the soul. This can easily be done at the very first moment of the affront; it is harder later, when hate is once established in the heart. It is very helpful, besides, to fix clearly in mind, from the beginning, that we absolutely must forgive, even to "seventy times seven." This thought makes it much easier to determine from the outset to keep collected, and thus we are better disposed to shut out hatred from the start.

Here are some other helpful considerations:

The truth is not always victorious on this earth; that is, not the truth as it is embodied in a man, mixed with all his weaknesses and errors; for which very reason it is impossible for it always to conquer. But God is victorious, and nothing happens against his will; this

alone is the true consolation when enemies assault us.

The enemies God sends a man he also takes away, as soon as they have fulfilled their purpose. "When a man's ways please the Lord, then he sets even his enemies at peace with him." That is a very sure sign that one stands in God's grace.

It is much better to forget the evil one receives than to forgive it. It is easy for a remnant of bitterness to cling about forgiveness, or a kind of haughtiness, a kind of holding oneself superior to offenders "beneath one's notice."

Bearing a grudge, feeling resentment, taking things ill is always a mark of a rather small nature. Better take revenge; impotent hate is quite worthless and injures only yourself, not your adversary.

In the criticisms made by one's enemies there is in most cases a grain of truth, though put in a light too sharp and one-sided. Therefore it is always well to listen to an enemy's criticisms, but not to rate them too high nor to feel them too keenly. Above all, one should never let them impose upon him; that is always a mistake.

That men speak evil of us is hard, but it preserves us, as Thomas à Kempis says,

"from the magic mist of vainglory," and compels us to seek God, who knows our innermost heart, as our witness and judge. Then for the first time he becomes indispensable and fast bound to us.

Such a passage through ignominy is therefore especially needful for men who afterward are to bear great honors without harm.

One may accordingly be induced not to hate his enemies, not merely through motives of religion, but also through motives of prudence; for enemies not only often become friends later, but one is likewise indebted to them for very many correct views; on the other hand, those who at first are very amiable often speak a different language later on. Those who oppose one in important matters are always particularly easy to come to terms with; for they are people who have serious scruples and are open to reason. The indifferent, who interpose no objections, but also do not listen, are far more dangerous opponents.

The right programme for one's demeanor toward enemies is not, generally speaking, that they must be crushed (as would be quite impossible in most cases), but that

they are to be reconciled. Whoever keeps this constantly before his eyes will never hate too violently and will suffer much to pass by in silence that discussion would make only worse.

Wherever possible, then, we must deal with our enemies in our best and calmest frame of mind; for if we are inwardly ruffled, we are also much more inclined to an unfavorable and unjust judgment of others. Nor should we lower ourselves before them in order to gain their good-will; that seldom succeeds. Many men, many nations in fact, will not at all tolerate too much kindness.

Thus it is a great point of prudence not to come frequently, and never unnecessarily, into the company of those who are radically opposed to our conception of life. For we either suffer some loss in character, or there results a widening of the chasm.

But what, then, is there left for us to hate? or are we to explain everything away? I am far from asserting that. There is still enough left in the world worth hating, and with this, war can and must be waged. Above all, there is the spirit of being bad on principle, the spirit that purposely contends against the spirit

of God, and that persecutes the good because it is good and endeavors to overthrow it. To this spirit give your vigorous and outspoken hate, wherever and in whatever form it appears; but in most cases it dies out in the men who embody it, in the third or fourth generation at the very latest. Very often it changes, in their descendants, to the opposite spirit of good.

To give help to evil men of this stripe, or to stand "impartially" between them and good men, instead of standing by the latter in every such conflict, is a serious fault that will be avenged on every one who is guilty of it.

A very difficult chapter to write is that on companionship with women, for they are the instruments of both the best and the worst that can be awakened in a man: on the one hand, unbridled self-gratification and alienation from all that is higher and nobler, qualities which they awaken especially in young people and which are the chief cause of the downfall of entire nations; on the other hand, a most efficacious uplift away from a man's natural tendencies, to a wholly different, freer, and better conception of life. Most critics of women

accordingly err in speaking of them as of a uniform mass similar in character, while, on the contrary, in this part of humanity there is a far more marked division into two distinct classes, and a much more constant retention and transmission of good as well as bad characteristics.

In a very peculiar passage of the Old Testament the same distinction is made, even in that very early stage of humanity, between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men," who are not lacking in outward charm, indeed, but through their very charms become a curse.

This difference in women is still to be found in our day, and so the first counsel is this: Have no unnecessary association with the "daughters of men" and guard against every closer alliance with them, no matter what may be sung by the poets, for they themselves are often led astray by just this peculiar charm of women.

In other respects, however, the difference between women and men would not be so great if their education and especially their legal position were more alike, and toward this the politics and pedagogy of to-day are striving. Christianity at any rate makes no distinction, and even the Old Testament already knows of women

(even married ones) who filled the highest state offices, not of hereditary right as today, forsooth, but solely by virtue of their own worth, of the spirit which dwelt within. The "spirit of God" can surely dwell in every human being, and this is the thing that decides, and not the structure of the body.

Women are in general more easy to understand than men. They deceive no man for long, in the sense that he really holds the bad in them for good, but only in the sense that he prefers the bad to the good because of its sensual charm, in the false hope that this charm may be a lasting and happy one. For women, therefore, there is surely but one means of lastingly appearing to be something that they desire; and that is, to be it. Yet it is harder, though by so much the more meritorious, for them to be spiritual, good, and noble, since, instead of reaping recognition for it, they are often obliged to see exactly the opposite qualities valued and sought. A truly noble woman, therefore, stands on a higher level of moral perfection than the best man.

Furthermore, what is generally true of humanity is especially applicable to women, that those who have not experi-

enced trouble, but have only been fed upon the pleasures of life, remain superficial and mediocre. With women the latter experience is found in even special measure, because their whole present training, in the so-called cultured circles, tends to give them the impression that a finer enjoyment of life is the real aim of their existence.

From this conception of life there results a naïve and thoughtless egotism which conceives the whole world to be only a beautiful meadow, where the women have all the flowers to gather to adorn themselves with and to please themselves with. In this egotism they often far surpass men in selfishness; the more amiable outer side of this naïveté may not blind us to this.

The character of women can very well be judged from their treatment of flowers. A girl that on her walk pulls as many flowers as possible for herself and has no desire to leave any behind for others has a tendency to greediness and pleasure-seeking. A lady who, after looking at a beautiful flower or bouquet for a short time, will permit it to lie and wither, instead of putting it in water or of making some poor child happy with it, has no warm heart. But if she pulls flowers quite to

pieces, she will some day no less unconcernedly deal with men who have put their trust in her.

It is naturally still worse with the hearts of those tender creatures who with their fingers crush a harmless gnat sunning itself at the window, or purposely tread upon a little worm or beetle crawling over their path. It is well to keep oneself at a good distance from them. Likewise from all those who wear conspicuous dresses; the clothing of a true lady should never attract attention, either by being too striking or too plain.

Women do rightly, on the whole, when they act with warmth and feeling; they are rarely fitted for a merely intellectual companionship, and those who are, are not very lovable, as a rule, and have no inward peace. Even a very clever woman brings unqualified happiness only to a man at least as clever, and she is herself never happy if she has the constant feeling that she far surpasses the man. Ardent feminine natures are a great happiness for him who understands how to enjoy their companionship without blame; otherwise they are like a fire that diffuses light and warmth indeed, but may consume their own house

and the houses of others. Very quiet women, on the other hand, easily grow to be somewhat insipid.

What women value most in men is power, whose complete absence they never pardon. Therefore adorers like poor Brackenburg, in Goethe's "Egmont," never get their deserts from them; they actually think more of the men who slight them or treat them badly than they do of men who are weak.

Most unhappy are the feelings of a noble woman when, through her own bad choice, or through the folly of her relations, she has fallen to a weakling who seeks compensation for his unmanliness in the outer world by a constant and petty mastery in the house. Dante would have had to invent yet another special punishment for these house-tyrants, against whom it is just the best women that are defenceless, and who may be governed only by a woman of strong egotism.

With this, we have come to the question of marriage. The best relationship with women not already in the family is marriage, and it is one of the chief causes of the deterioration of our age that (and in large measure on account of the pleasure-seeking

and the false education of the women themselves) marriage is made difficult to a large proportion of educated men, so that they do not marry at all, or do not marry at the right age. Indeed, among the "civilized" nations, it has actually resulted in the circumstance, unfavorable for the position of women, that they are no longer valued for their own sake, but only for what they "bring along" with them.

Who in fact could wish to torment himself with cares his life long, just to support a vain creature fond of dress and pleasure, while he might, with the same means, procure a far pleasanter mode of life? This is the word pretty generally current now among the younger lords of creation, who have none too much of the spirit of sacrifice.

It is often rather doubtful whether marriage always deserves to be called a "divine" institution under present-day conditions, when the husband very commonly seeks in this way a betterment of his financial situation, or, if he belongs to the less "cultured" classes, seeks a slave to do his work without pay, while the parents of the wife wish to secure, in marriage, a life-insurance policy for their daughter, however wretched a one it may

prove to be, and the daughter herself, in the momentary triumph of this social promotion, forgets the sad ensuing loss of her rights. It is one of the saddest yet commonest tragedies to see a fine, highly educated girl in the almost unlimited power of a mediocre young man, solely because many mothers still regard it as a kind of shame to keep their daughters unmarried.

We can understand why most women are glad to marry, because it is only in a good marriage that they have the opportunity of independently unfolding all the powers that lie within them. But that the selfish ones, who know how to put themselves at the right time upon a proper footing of defence, have often a better lot than the good wives, who lavish a vast amount of love, fidelity, self-sacrifice, thought, and vitality upon a questionable man of whom they have made for themselves an incorrect picture in their fancy—this is one of life's most melancholy experiences, and one that might most make us doubt God's justice. A woman, therefore, should never marry entirely below her station, never marry a man who is morally not entirely above suspicion, or is pettily egotistic, or is not a man of thoroughly good

disposition; nor, as a rule, should she marry out of her country and nationality. But for men who are seriously struggling upward, an alliance with a high-minded woman from the better ranks of life is the method best of all suited to get quickly forward.

It will always be disputed whether it is better, in a good marriage, to seek and to find ardent love, or quiet esteem and friendship. I would decide for the latter, as a general rule; but—he who does not know the former knows not what life is.

The true and unselfish companionship of a man with a worthy woman of his home circle—wife, mother, sister, daughter, and not least, grandmother and granddaughter—undoubtedly belongs to the highest, the tenderest, the purest joys of this life, and brings out qualities in him that otherwise would always lie fallow. A marriage is not by a long way always to be called a stroke of good fortune, but an old bachelor, too, is never the man that could and should be made of him.

On the whole do not seek to know men by relying overmuch on theories. The greater part of that knowledge is attained

through one's own experiences, mostly sad ones. Only, resolve to experience nothing twice over. They who do so are the truly wise; not those, if there are any such, who make no mistakes.

Besides, our knowledge of men must not serve merely to help us separate the goats from the sheep and henceforth concern ourselves only with the latter; but it should serve to keep us from being deceived, and to enable us to work for the improvement of ourselves and of all with whom our lot brings us in touch, with a better understanding of their character. For when a man once abandons the belief that every single human soul has an infinite value and that it is worth any trouble taken to save it, then he finds himself upon an inclined plane on which he gradually slips back again into complete selfishness.

The final word as to the knowledge of men must be—love to all. Love alone enables us to know a man exactly as he is, and yet not to flee him. To know men, without love, has always been a misfortune and the cause of the profound melancholy of many wise men in all ages; it has driven them to renounce the society of their fellows, or to take refuge in the the-

ory of absolute government. For there are only two ways of dealing with men, when one has once learned to know them — through fear, or through love. All intermediate methods are delusions.

But if any one appeals to fear, or if love is to any one only lip-service, let him hear Brother Jacopone da Todi: "That I love my neighbor I really know only when, after he has injured me, I love him no less than before. For if I then loved him less, I should thereby prove that, before, it was not he I loved, but myself."

IV. WHAT IS CULTURE?

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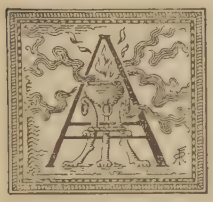

PROPHET of Israel of the latter days of the Kings, who himself seems to have been, in a way, self-taught, announces to his nation the oncoming of a new era in about the following words: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, but of the hearing of the truth. In that day shall the fair youths and maidens faint, who now are relying upon the god at Dan and the way of Beer-sheba. For they shall so fall therewith that they shall not be able to rise again." What Amos meant by the god at Dan and the "way of Beer-sheba" is hardly to be discovered now with exactness, and indeed, for our purposes, we may leave it undetermined. Only thus much is clear from the context, that they were for the time elements of culture whose insufficiency should later come to light—as actually happened at the beginning of the Christian era.

[1] Originally an address before an association of young merchants.

Widely recognized phenomena of our own days fittingly remind us again of these ancient, half-forgotten words.

On the other hand, a struggle that may almost be called violent is passing through the broad masses of the nations. They are striving to win culture for themselves as quickly as possible, so that they may elevate themselves to the power which, in their view, goes hand in hand with this culture, or, as they mostly conceive it, with the acquisition of certain kinds of knowledge.

On the other hand, the upper circles of the classes hitherto known as cultured are being gripped with a kind of despair over the already attained and still attainable results of this search for knowledge for its own sake, as a renowned scientist has already plainly expressed with his well-known saying, "Ignoramus, ignorabimus," and as is becoming actually manifest in the ever-growing specializing of the sciences. For this specializing means, at bottom, nothing less than that there is no universal knowledge any more, still less a universal culture which comprehends all that men have achieved and thought; it means that there are only isolated departments of knowledge, behind which the

abyss of ignorance yawns, for the most learned specialist, no less than for the most commonplace layman.

In the young generation of the civilized nations which is growing up under such auspices, there is prevailing a certain physical and mental weariness, which makes one seriously doubt whether the whole of modern education must not be on the wrong track if, instead of producing mental and physical power and joy in the lifelong acquisition of new and newer knowledge, it only prematurely dulls and destroys all these capacities, and if it is bringing on a too weakly organized and nervous race which would as little prove a match for the onset of some horde of healthy barbarians as did, once upon a time, the Roman or Greek cosmopolitan culture, outwardly brilliant, but likewise undermined by just such over-civilization as ours.

With this, we have arrived at once at the heart of our question. By culture we must understand something greater, something other than knowledge, or learnedness in special subjects, if it is at all to be something beneficial and desirable. Relatively speaking, the most striking result of general culture must be the healthy and vigorous development of every man's

personality into a full and rounded human life, inwardly at peace. Otherwise it will be of no very definite value, either to himself or to his state.

If it does not effect this it does not justify the hopes that have, for so long a time, been set upon it, and there may stand before us a time such as humanity has already more than once experienced, when the most highly civilized peoples have been overpowered by barbarians, simply by virtue of greater physical strength and greater mental freshness and originality, and when too delicately constituted republics have not been in a condition to withstand the momentum of such onslaughts, directed by some single powerful will.

Therefore the question "What is Culture?" is a question of the life of our whole present race, as well as, in a special degree, of our native land and the nature of its government.

I

By this very ambiguous and therefore often misunderstood word "culture" we must understand ourselves to mean *an evolving* from an originally formless, rough condition into a condition in which the development into the best of which the

material is capable is completed, or at least is in the process of unfolding without hindrance.

Every man at the beginning is a rough block that can only be fashioned into a true human form and a true work of art partly by the formative power of life itself with its manifold influences, and partly by the hand and sagacity of men. And as an unskilful sculptor may so misshape and spoil a stone intrusted to him that no real work of art can any longer be made of it, or may carve it so delicately that it loses the massiveness and strength necessary to resist all outer influences, so also, in the art of human culture, we often speak from painful experience of a man's culture as neglected, or distorted, or too excessive and refined.

In true culture (one that does not injure but benefits men), three things seem to be essential: the conquering of natural sensuality and natural selfishness through higher interests, the wholesome and symmetrical training of the physical and mental faculties, and a correct philosophical and religious conception of life. Where one of these three is lacking, there is a drying up in the man of something that had been capable of a better development.

1. The final goal of all true culture is the liberation of man from the "sensual gravitation" which every one experiences in himself, and from the selfishness which, though it rests in the final analysis upon man's impulse to self-preservation, stands nevertheless in opposition to the purpose of his life. Essentially as a creature of the senses man begins his course in this world, essentially as a creature of the spirit he should finish it here, and, as we hope, continue it in another world under more favorable conditions. Thus there lies already in his nature a conflict between that which *is* and therefore would naturally like to persist, and that which is undoubtedly demanded by his deepest and best feelings and which is meant to grow and develop. If he does not stay as he is, then the ground seems at times to give way under his feet; but if he does stay as he is, then his better self is always grievously reproving him, and saying that he is not fulfilling his duty and is not becoming what he could and should become. This is the battle that every man begins with himself as soon as he comes to consciousness about himself, and in this battle he must at any cost carry off the victory.

All inward dissatisfaction springs from

sensuality or selfishness ; these two never fail to show themselves as the primal causes, when the matter is run to the ground. Any genuine happiness is not conceivable where the spiritual nature has not gained the day over the sensual, and where a disposition toward liberality, humanity, and kindliness has not won the victory over a disposition to narrow selfishness — a victory already decided in one's innermost tendency, and, as a matter of practical life, to be daily gained anew.

Whoever has not been able thus to subdue himself will never be a match for the world around him, which fights him with the same though thousand fold greater powers of selfishness. All that is left for him is to defend himself in this struggle for existence by continually injuring and destroying others and by uniting himself with others into groups with mutual interests, groups that are likewise of a purely selfish nature.

To try to suppress this struggle for existence which now threatens to destroy all the nobility that is in man and to make us like beasts of prey, is the chiefest task of all the truly cultured men of our time.

They must first show by their own example that this struggle is not necessary,

and that there is a way out of the labyrinths of this life other than the sad one of who shall be strongest in his selfishness. After all, the man who proves strongest in this struggle, even in the most favorable case, only makes the existence of many fellow-men the heavier, and his own better self, besides, has suffered harm.

The first step is, that one shall no longer be recognized as a truly cultured man who has any trace of such a conception of life. And it must and will come to that, before long, in our civilized states. On the one hand, selfish solicitude for self and as much as possible of sensual enjoyment during a short life—on the other, human kindness, care for others, mental advancement, and the development of the nobler powers of the soul: these are the two great armies which now stand over against each other, ready for battle, and in one or the other you will be obliged to take your place.

2. The second point is the proper and healthy physical and mental development of all our faculties, in the interest of these higher aims. We are not to live with this better conception of life in cloisters or studies, but as far as possible to bring it

into use in our ordinary life and in every calling — but not, of course, in any calling that stands in radical opposition to this better conception of life.

Here is the point where oftentimes a somewhat morbid and exaggerated philosophical, religious, or scientific tendency stands likewise opposed to true culture. There is no profit in a philosophy that does not hold its own in the full current of life, and there is little help in a religion which exists only in the church on Sundays and has no value in the market or in business. And even knowledge, in itself, has no great worth if it does not serve, somehow, to build up a more worthy kind of life for oneself or for others.

In a sickly, overfatigued body, with nerves continually overexcited, no quite healthy soul can live and work unimpeded. It is one of the chief mistakes in the culture of our day that a kind of misunderstanding has arisen between body and mind, whereby the body is harmed directly and, through the body, the mind. Besides, our whole modern education is much more directed toward the mechanical acquisition of things to be remembered than to the attainment of real convictions and of true knowledge.

3. But all these things, the pursuit of ideals, the search for true knowledge, and the maintenance of bodily tone, do not yet help a man toward true culture, unless they rest upon the conviction of the existence of a transcendental world whose forces can effectively come to his help. His sensual tendency and his natural selfishness are far too strong for him to subdue them wholly by his own expedients and without the help of such a Power residing outside himself. And the motives for doing it are too weak. What indeed should impel him to fight a hard and at first apparently almost fruitless battle with himself and the surrounding world his life long, if this life is only a transitory animal existence with no further destination?

The strength of a merely natural nobility, which for a time, perhaps, may lift itself above these things, does not, under all circumstances, hold out in the presence of this conception of life, but easily despairs of itself when trials, continuing and great, draw nigh. There must therefore be the introduction into human existence of a power which is mightier than all a man's natural forces and which makes it possible for him to master himself and no longer to fear all external evils, in comparison

with the evil of high treason to his better self.

That there is such a power, which one can not indeed logically prove, but which he can put to the test and himself experience,—this is the mysterious truth of religion; and it would be much less of a mystery if all men, if but once in their life, would venture the trial whether there is such a power. To be sure, if any one does not want to let quite go of his pleasure-seeking and selfishness, or does not altogether yet desire to attain, at any cost, to something better than the ordinary life, then, in spite of his trial, he will not have a perfect experience of this power, and in that case the mere outward profession of a religion does not help him much. He remains on the whole as he is, even though he go to church every day.

But if he has this will, then he receives this power, then he infallibly becomes another man, to such a degree that one may truthfully call it a new birth. Then only will all his natural gifts and knowledge become really alive in him and productive for the welfare of himself and others.

The highest step is complete self-renunciation, in which a man is only the receptacle of divine thoughts and impulses;

but it is very dangerous to work oneself into such a condition by the fantasy, before it comes of itself and is really at hand. The main thing in religion is not its immediate perfect attainment, but that every one who will may enter on the way and pass from a joyless existence to a gradually ascending life.

This is the way to true culture, and every one must try to travel it by himself. It can not be taught; it can only be shown.

The evidence that one has true culture is, first, a gradually increasing mental health and power, then a certain higher sagacity that comes in, and finally a peculiar, larger caliber of spirit which one can bring about in no other way, which one can not imitate, and which really forms the chief element in culture. Yet these thoroughly cultured men are, for all that, entirely natural human beings, but free from all pretence and vanity; free also from all struggling, from all seeking for life's good things, on which human happiness does not have to depend, and in whose incessant pursuit men only lose their souls; free from all unhealthy pessimism, or monkish seclusion; free from fear or nervousness or impatience; cheer-

ful and quiet in the innermost centre of their being, and continuing in their mental and spiritual soundness up to the highest goal of human life. "As their days, so is their strength," as the Old Testament says with great beauty and truth.

The highest imaginable degree of this culture is a complete devotion to all that is good and great, a devotion that no sort of trouble any longer clouds, or can cloud; it is that condition of the soul, mentally conceivable but seemingly rarely attained, in which there is no longer any battle with the sensual and the transitory, and the struggle of nature against the law of the spirit is completely at end.

This is that condition of perfection which we ascribe, in its consummate development, to the Divine Being alone, but toward which we also are called to strive; and the gradual winning of all men to this goal is the task in particular of all true education, and looked at in the whole, it is the end to which all history is moving.

II

No false culture nor half-culture is therefore to be compared with this true culture, which is unmistakable in its

effects upon the whole nature of men, and upon their manner of intercourse with others. Even in the very simple relations of life it will always reveal itself by a certain greatness of spirit it confers, a spirit that distinguishes its possessor from the ordinary man in the like ranks of life. And along with this there is a quiet sense of peace with oneself and with others such as no other philosophy of life can assure, and which, by its contagious serenity, is apparent to every one who has ever been with such people.

However, it is not wholly unnecessary, particularly at the present time, to set down the chief characteristics of a false or insufficient culture, characteristics which one meets very often and can not help but notice. They are particularly the following:

1. Great extravagance in living. A man of genuine culture will never set a *very* high value either upon his outward personal appearance, or upon where he lives, or what he eats and drinks, or the like things: and so he will carefully avoid luxury, as improper for himself and unjust toward others. Excessive finery, golden rings on all the fingers, watch chains with

which one might, if necessary, tie a calf, houses in which one can not move for the furniture, banquets at which one risks undermining even a robust constitution —these are all quite sure signs of a lack of culture and things that one must guard against. For whoever has intelligence sees through all this ; it is only the fools who are blinded by it. The surest mark of culture in all these things is a certain noble, easy simplicity in one's whole personal appearance and manner of life.

The love of display and pleasure is always a sign of lacking culture, and culture alone can thoroughly guard against it. Even a general raising of the standard of life in a country is desirable only in so far as a rough, half-animal, unworthy mode of living is by its means done away with ; otherwise a continual increase in men's needs is a misfortune for any country, and the cultured classes must earnestly strive against it and set a better example. A noble simplicity of living has also the advantage that it can always remain the same under any circumstances, while people inclined to luxury usually have two modes of living, one before people, and the other for themselves.

2. An external, but also very easily recognizable and characteristic mark of culture is the possession or absence of books; especially with persons who have the most ample means of procuring them. A fine lady who reads a soiled volume from a lending library you may safely set down as but half-cultured at best, and if she slips an embroidered cover over the volume, it does not remedy the matter; it only shows that she is conscious of her fault. An elegant home in which but a dozen books stand unread on an ornamental whatnot you may quietly regard as uncultured, with all its inmates; especially if, as usual, the books are only novels.

Much reading still remains, in our day as always, a necessity of general culture. Of a thoroughly cultured man one can properly require that in the course of a moderately long life he shall have read all of the very best in literature, and shall have gained, besides, a tolerably general and correct idea of all the branches of human knowledge, so that "nothing of human is to him quite alien."

But if you ask how one can get time for this, outside of one's business or occupation, the answer is this: Break away from all

unnecessary things, from the hotel, from societies, clubs, and social pleasures, from the useless reading of a great portion of the newspapers, from the theatre, where you learn little that is worth knowing in these days, from the too frequent concerts, from skating for whole afternoons, and from much else besides that every one can easily charge against himself as his special manner of squandering time. One can not be very cultured and at the same time enjoy all the possible pleasures going.

But, if necessary, you may even break away somewhat from business. That pays, and you will soon see what a difference there is, even as regards business success, between a cultured merchant and a merely clever manager.

3. A further sign of defective culture is a loud, rude nature : talking very loud, in public localities, in cars, in restaurants, etc. ; acting as if one were the only person there ; and conducting oneself discourteously in places where many men gather. Our age is less cultured in this respect than some earlier ones have been.

On the same footing stands everything that savors of advertising and boasting, all showy pretence and braggadocio. A

merchant, for example, who greatly exaggerates the importance of his business, or puts very boastful advertisements in the papers; or a lady who wears a silk dress without quite immaculate undergarments—those surely you would not take for people of sufficient culture.

4. Work also belongs to culture. It is not only a quite indispensable means of attaining thereto, but idleness, even if one can "afford" it, is always the mark of a disposition with low ideals; and that is directly opposed to culture. Such a man will seek his pleasure in something else, something less fine, or will possess a foolish pride in not being obliged to work, or finally he is a fellow of coarse sensibilities to whom it is a matter of indifference whether others perish by his side whom he could have helped by his exertions.

An idler by profession is therefore surely a man without ideals and without real culture, however elegant may be the external forms of culture he has gathered round him. They are empty forms without real substance, and every man of better culture is bound not to allow himself to be deceived thereby and not to respect such people.

5. But not much less harmful is the inordinate passion for work. When it is voluntary, it nearly always springs from ambition or greed, two of the worst enemies of true culture; they always show that one sets the highest value upon something else than culture. Or this passion for work is only a bad habit and the imitation of a bad example, or finally it may spring from a want of inner peace and control, which are themselves the fruit of culture.

Whoever works on Sundays just the same as on week-days, when he is not compelled to, you may quietly consider as little cultured as the man who does nothing any day.

6. A very necessary element in culture is an absolute trustworthiness and an upright conduct in all money-matters. To the cultured man it is not permitted to display prodigality, or an aristocratic contempt for money; a disposition like that always indicates lack of culture, and is unjust toward one's needy fellow-men, besides being mostly pretence. Nor is it permitted him, on the other hand, to show undue parsimony, nor dishonesty even in the smallest particulars. On this point, the Scriptures say quite truly: "He that

is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."

An absolutely rightful employment of money, with the strictest honesty, with complete disregard for money as the goal of life, and yet with a proper valuation of it as the means of attaining higher ends, is perhaps the surest of all signs of a man of genuine culture; as the chase after gains and the worship of money most surely betrays the uncultured man.

7. Another sufficient indication of defective culture is arrogance toward inferiors or toward those who are poorer off, and this is usually combined with subservience toward superiors and toward the wealthy. This is the special characteristic of parvenus who spring from uncultured surroundings. A man of the best culture will always be polite and friendly, but the more so, the more he has to do with those who stand below him, with the dependent or the oppressed; and the less so, even to the bare edge of politeness, the more he has to do with some one who makes pretensions, or wants to treat him as an inferior. To show deep respect for the mere wealth of another is, as said before, the most unmistakable mark of a

man completely lacking in any culture of his own.

8. There are still a number of minor signs of lack of culture, which may, however, be in part only bad habits or the result of defective bringing up; they do not always point conclusively to a general lack of culture. Among these minor signs one may rightly reckon: much talking about oneself; gossip and scandal over the personal affairs of others; a great tendency to talkativeness on all occasions; a hasty, uncertain, violent temperament; making many excuses for oneself where it is not necessary or has already been done; to accuse or disparage oneself in the hope that others will then assert the contrary; a too-zealous officiousness; or a too-effusive politeness.

The thoroughly fine aristocratic temperament, such as the English especially prefer, demands a very great self-possession and preciseness; but this can easily degenerate into indifference and coldness, and is then a fault. Enthusiasm and eagerness for whatever is good a cultured man always possesses; where this is lacking, there is also a lack of true culture, in spite of fine pretences.

But this is also certain: when the enthusiasm is genuine and is not merely manufactured or the zeal of a beginner in the noble art of life, then it will never be too forward and loud in expressing itself. A noisy virtue is always a little suspicious, or at least is still in its infancy.

Culture, therefore, is essentially the gradual development of inner power toward what is right and true, with the purpose of elevating and liberating one's own higher nature from the bonds of the ordinary animal sensuality with which it came into the world, and of training it up to a higher level of life in complete soundness of mind and body. Wherever it does not do this, it is of very subordinate value; and this it must always above all things do in the so-called cultured classes, for whom this is a primal duty.

It noway suffices to be always talking of the "elevation of the lower classes," who are often superior now to the upper in particular elements of true culture. The chief need of our present day is much rather the vigorous rehabilitation of this upper class, which is deeply sunk in pleasure-seeking and the materialistic conception of things, and has turned aside from the higher ends of life.

III

Now if you should resolve to try in this manner to attain to true culture, you must have great patience with yourself. It is not the matter of a single day or of a single resolution, although a great part is played by making, once for all, a firm and binding resolve, to which one always comes back again as often as one has in some particular departed from it.

True culture, like true virtue in the main, is a matter of growth. By degrees it grows in strength and insight, but can not be suddenly and forcibly won by any kind of magic process; one must make some definite beginning and then persevere in it for life. But this is the only true purpose of living, never to be laid aside, and the only outcome of life wholly to be wished.

A beginning can be made in different ways: in a purely practical way by the acquisition of good habits; or philosophically, by meditating upon, and coming to know, and discriminating between, the true and the untrue in the conduct of life; or, through religion, at once seeking the infinite and the power that thence springs. The easiest way is undoubtedly the last,

and to this, even though one takes the other ways, one is finally led. For the secret of true culture, its beginning and its real key, lies in the conquering of selfishness and especially of the inordinate desire for pleasure. Thus it comes about that often a very simple man, who possesses little knowlege and has had little contact with so-called good society, is nevertheless more truly cultured than some aristocratic or learned gentleman. He has the real essentials of culture before they have, and has taken the easiest way to acquire it.

Only when a man is no longer constantly busied about himself and no longer thinks of himself alone does he receive his freedom of spirit and the full use of the forces that lie in his mental and spiritual power. The spirit, then for the first, becomes in some sort free from an occupation not worthy of itself, and becomes capable of taking up and quietly working at things which otherwise had remained forever concealed under personal cares and pleasures.

To be sure—and this also must be said—these things are hard so long as the youthful man is in the full tide of his physical and mental unfolding. Such young people as have already attained to these things very early in life usually do not

live very long. It appears that man, like the animal, and like the plant before it bears fruit, needs a time of self-seeking activity, in order first to obtain a sufficient growth and strength as a natural creature. In the case of man, however, there surely and naturally comes a moment when an exclusive or preëminent occupation about one's own self becomes unnatural, and in every larger nature — and, it may perhaps be said, in every existence at all worthy of men — there comes the impulse to free oneself from oneself and to live for an idea.

This is the most decisive moment of existence. It is, with some men, comparable to a sudden, violent death, and a new birth to another life. With others, it is more like the gradual and quiet sinking of the former things into slumber, and the awakening and slow fashioning of a new nature.

But if this change has once taken place, in one way or the other, then all the real questions of human existence appear in another light, clear and solved.

But if this change does not take place in a man who is not wholly animal in his nature, then there always stays with him a never-quieted thirst for such a change; and likewise a feeling of guilt, which clearly

says to him that he could and should have become something better, a voice within him he can not drown, however great his seeming success.

IV

With this we have also solved the last question you will put: "What shall we get out of it? What real gain has a man from true culture?" To this is to be answered that every great inward advancement a man makes rests first upon a faith. He must forsake something he knows, and seek something toward which only a presentiment is leading him, something he can not understand yet fully, because the capacity is for the present lacking.

But if he possesses the courage to will it, he attains it; and of those who have attained this goal, not one has yet found the cost too high, or the toil too hard.

The reward of virtue in this world is just this, that virtue *is*, and that it can be overcome by no power of the world, but itself is the only real power and force that will completely fill life full and satisfy.

Tennyson has expressed this very beautifully in his poem "Wages":

"*Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,*
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

"*The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,*
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die."

It is therefore, in the judgment of the best even of our own day, fully worth the trouble to strive for true culture, and all attain who really desire—rich or poor, learned or unlearned. Indeed, what Christ first said for his own generation is also very appropriate for ours, that simple souls and modest lives stand much more intimately near to true culture, and on the way to it do not meet so many and so great hin-

drances as do the wise and the prudent, and especially the rich, who must first strip off infinitely many prejudices and attachments to outward things, all of which are irreconcilable with true culture.

It is therefore harder for some and easier for others to attain to culture, but for none impossible, save those whose mind is wholly bound up with material things, and are satisfied besides with a merely external culture that is rather form and show than reality, however much it may claim to be real.

An ancient Chinese philosopher has already expressed this very well in the following verses, somewhat naïvely translated:

> "*Men who win the highest prize*
> *Are quick to learn and quickly wise;*
> *Men in the second rank belong*
> *Who're wise, but in the learning long;*
> *Those people must be classed as thirds*
> *Who stupid stay, and learn—but words.*"

It scarcely lies within the will of every one of us whether his lot shall assign him to the first of these classes, and happily it is not a matter of very much concern. They are the great exceptions, the moral geniuses of humanity. But to the second rank every

one of us is called, yes, emphatically challenged, when once the way has been shown. And the saddest thing that can happen to him in life is, if he nevertheless remains among the third sort of men, whose existence, at the end, has had no real worth, either for themselves, or for others.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

"Wisdom is more precious than rubies: and none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her.

"Length of days is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

V. NOBLE SOULS

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ANT somewhere suggests that all the natural capacities of a being were intended completely to unfold, at some time, along the line of some definite purpose, but that in man (the only reasonable being on earth) the capacities intended for the use of the reason can be unfolded completely only in the race, and not in every particular individual.

But since this does not come about quite of itself, the conclusion would necessarily follow that there must always be separate individuals who are specially called, to bring about for the whole of humanity this development to a higher stage of its existence—with the proviso that they shall also have willed to devote themselves to this purpose and, to this end, to set aside all other personal aims. And even the further conclusion would seem to be justified that no single human life would fully suffice for this, but that rather a certain bequeathal of this mission from hand to hand would be possible and fitting.

With this intent, the Mosaic legislation

cherished the magnificent plan of lifting a whole tribe out of the ordinary conditions of the life of the nation, and devoting it to this, the noblest of the activities. Very significantly, this tribe was forbidden the possession of property; the Lord alone should be their inheritance, and every pious Israelite was obliged, in the interest of the whole, to help support them with the tenth part of his income (which, however, he could bestow on any Levite he chose). Whether such an arrangement could be realized in any of our modern states, and whether (and this is the important point) it could be kept up indefinitely as established, might be very questionable. But the certainty remains that every human society needs, for its preservation, some such kind of salt, without which it would the more easily fall into corruption. This salt is — the "noble souls."

Doubtless Christianity, at the beginning, had the intention of requiring such a temper of soul of every one of its followers. But we have since become much more modest in our demands on Christendom in its entirety; we have been driven to say that there exist certain higher claims than the ordinary ones laid on everybody, but that these higher claims shall never

require, so long as the world stands, an artificial, castelike order of men, but rather men who will accept them in a spirit of perfect freedom and even joy; and all thoughts of a specially privileged position resting on these claims, and all consequent feelings of superiority, must be completely shut out.

Thus this aristocracy has the advantage over all others in that it is immediately accessible to all and that every one may become the founder of an aristocratic family after this sort. Nor will there ever be much crowding to get into this aristocracy, but nearly every one will be ready to yield this place to the modern Levites, if only they, in return, will give up the eager competition for other advantages.

Noble souls, therefore, are those who completely renounce the chief aim of ordinary souls, the personal enjoyment of life, in order that they may devote themselves the more effectively to the elevation of the whole race.

The ready objection, that both can perhaps be combined, may well be disputed. Unless one purposely closes his eyes, his experience will rather show that this is not the case; and any proof other

than experience will convince no one on this point. Nor can we yet really believe in any transformation and elevation of the *whole* of Christendom through anything that may happen in the future. Christendom, at least at first, can be regenerated only by the gradual formation once more of such a band of volunteers within it as will earnestly and literally accept the demands of the Christian faith—more earnestly than (in a purely practical sense) is possible to the majority of the souls comprising Christendom, or than, at least for the present, can be expected of them. The danger lurking therein, that a new Pharisaism might spring from it, is a real one; but the danger is lessened because this conception of life could remain on a purely individual basis, without taking any outward or organized form. It appears in general to be a characteristic mark of the present evolution of Christianity that, apart from all essential improvements in its outward form, it is going first to develop again from within into an "invisible church," into a kingdom that truly is not of this world. To explain this, however, is not the purpose of this chapter; it would rather contradict this chapter's leading thought, that it is first of all a duty for

the individual to proceed to his own transformation. The question for us here, therefore, is only this: What are the necessary characteristics of a truly noble soul? What are the chief obstacles that stand in the way of this extraordinary guidance of the spirit? And finally, is it possible in our day, and is it worth the trouble, to strive after this goal? What will they, who do thus, receive?

The opposite to "noble" is not "bad" or "vicious" (though these are not noble), but "little, narrow-hearted, provincial, thinking only of small aims in life and only of oneself or of one's immediate surroundings." A broad vision, a large heart for all, indifference for one's own self, care for others—all these are noble. Fearlessness is an essential element; also the not allowing oneself to be imposed upon by anything in the world, under any circumstances. This latter characteristic the genuine nobility has in common with the false, though in a pleasanter form and united with a sincere esteem for what is truly honorable, an esteem that the spurious nobility lacks. Another element is a certain finer cleanliness of spirit. No longer to be an animal in any direction,

no longer in any way to favor the merely physical being—this is our real calling, which we are to learn here on earth that we may pursue it hereafter. When the soul stands firmly upon this level (and it seldom reaches it in one generation), what is vulgar becomes, to noble souls, unnatural and therefore physically repugnant; while, at the lower level of development, it still charms and entices, though it may spiritually be already overcome.

The following particular qualities, then, are not noble: first, all vanity; this is a quite certain mark of a soul still small; therefore, second, all boasting, all self-praise in general, and all pretensions of even (so to speak) the most permissible nature. These last are not unmoral, perhaps, but they are at any rate common and small. Then we must add, further, all immoderate pleasure in any kind of enjoyment, even when not purely physical; in eating and drinking, in music and the drama, or what not. The noble man must always stand above his pleasure and never yield himself into its power. Only one step farther in the very common though often innocent gratification of pleasure is the finding of delight in luxury; a stain of

injustice is already associated with luxury, which infallibly means depriving another man of his own, and creates and maintains a dividing-line among men such as ought not to exist. A noble simplicity of living which does not degenerate into the cynicism of the Stoic is a certain mark of a soul by right of heredity already nobly born; but the love of luxury is the characteristic trait of the upstart. Luxury, with debts besides and one's consequent dependence upon men, is the acme of commonness and leads very often on into wrong-doing.

It is quite the contrary of noble to speak much of oneself, and particularly to boast of one's deeds or philanthropy — the latter, because one is scarcely justified in making much of a stir about it; for very few people give away what they themselves can make good use of, but only a part of their superfluity, which, because it is a superfluity, they do not even quite rightfully own. Those who are charitable in a really large-hearted fashion are, for the most part, only the poor, who regard it as a matter of course that they should help one another with everything they possess. With them, giving is not associated with glory, nor is receiving associated with shame; while the higher classes often seek

to balance accounts with their Christianity on the cheapest terms, by bringing their philanthropy well forward into men's notice.

To be sure, there is a way of concealing one's deeds in such a fashion that they are meant to be discovered and thus win double praise. And it is not wholly right, and particularly not wholly Christian to free oneself altogether from personal contact with poverty by means of contributions to benevolent institutions. The Gospel knows nothing of such societies as yet (perhaps it even excludes them), but simply says, "Give to him that asketh thee"; one might at most add, "unless it will manifestly do him harm,"—as really happens in some cases. The anxious avoidance of any contact with a callous or not quite cleanly hand is anything but truly noble.

It is not noble to feel disdain toward inferiors, toward poor people who are often the truly noble of this world, toward children, toward the oppressed of every sort, and even toward animals. The chase especially, much as it may belong to the pleasures of noble or would-be noble people, can not be regarded as anything truly noble, and particularly if it is connected

with no danger, but is simply a pleasure in the killing of defenceless creatures. Frederick the Great has a sharp passage about this in his writings, while the last French Bourbons were zealous huntsmen.

To be ever sincerely friendly with servants, never domineering or condescending, never familiar, but always generous and careful, is a great art which is rarely learned in a single generation, but is always a sure mark of nobility.

The moods of a noble soul are not based on pessimistic lines. The pessimists are those who have somehow fallen short and are incapable of struggling with courage for the highest things of life and of gaining them by the power and endurance necessary. Therefore they give out that they disclaim them, or represent the renunciation of them as the highest attainable goal. When their pessimism is not merely a passing phase in development, pessimists are always egotistical men of a narrow range of ideas, to whom one must not pay the honor of admiration. Thorough faultfinders, constant critics of everything, tormentors of women, overexacting, capable of falling into painful agitation over a misplaced article or over a train they have missed,—such are the least noble among them.

The noblest thing of all is the love of one's enemies. To be kind to one's friends, or to be friendly and fair toward everybody, is socially excellent, but a long way still from being noble. But they who take injuries quietly, and can always be just even to enemies, are the genuine aristocrats of the spirit.

The perfect pattern of nobility is Christ; many of his biographers give quite a false impression in depicting him too much from the humble and outwardly meek point of view, and thus carry many conceptions of our own bit of sky over into the oriental world, with its different ways of thought. It is just that unattainably perfect combination of the tenderest affection for the little ones, the poor, the oppressed, and the guilty, with that large and calm self-consciousness before all the high, the rich, and the mighty of that day (which nevertheless is never defiance or pride),—it is just that combination that lends to this personality a stamp it would be hard to declare purely human. To follow this type has since been the task of all who strive after perfection, and whoever turns away from it will always run the risk of chasing after a false ideal and not attaining the

goal. As one of these false ideals has himself truly said, "In the breast of every man two souls inhabit: the one, in the strong joy of love, holds to the world with clinging organs; the other lifts itself forcefully away from the mist to the fields of high surmise." A force exerted to subdue oneself, and a faith in these fields, will always in truth belong to the truly noble; and if the great poet, who never completely subdued the lesser of these souls in himself, says, in the second part of his most famous work, "Fool, whoever lifts yonder his blinking eyes, and fancies himself above the masses of his equals, let him stand fast and look about him here, for to him that can hear, this world is not mute,"—if he says this, then it is to be answered that to nobility there also belongs something of a foolishness that is yet wiser than all the wisdom of men.

The chief obstacles in the way of genuine nobility are the nobility that is not genuine and the fear of men.

The presence of some sort of "aristocracy" in every human society of long continuance is a proof of the need of something such, and at the same time the chief cause of its decay. One might say, some-

what paradoxically, that an aristocracy is at its purest and best where it has no right to exist; and at its worst where it possesses the greatest "rights." Those who belong to these higher classes live now, for the most part, in the vain delusion (to which they are systematically brought up, and by which they are debarred from any better conception) that they owe to humanity nothing further than their mere existence, or that there is in general no other society for them but the "upper ten thousand," as they are called in England. They deem it quite sufficient if they in a certain measure stand as representatives of "the beautiful" in the life of humanity, somewhat in the sense of the tasteless expression, "The rose that doth itself adorn, adorneth, too, the garden," or in accordance with the better expression, not always rightly applied, that common natures count for what they do, noble natures for what they are. Taken in the right sense, this last is true; for from nobly living, nobly doing necessarily follows of itself, while it is but hypocrisy without it. One of the surest marks of men with noble natures is that the unfortunate are dearer to them than the fortunate. Where this is not so there is no genuine aristocratic nature of God's grace,

but only an ordinary man, however showy his station in life.

A certain haughty inaccessibility is very pleasant to the proud, and passes with them for noble. With God, however, this is not the case, and the man to whom he is merciful he transfers to conditions of life where that must be given up. For no one has any feeling for such distant demigods who do not share in the common human lot. They purchase their "exceptional position" much too dearly, since by it they are shut out from knowing what real love is.

Then, too, it is strange that the most useless of these birds-of-paradise of human society (and proud, too, of their uselessness) very often deport themselves as zealous followers of Christianity, while their whole mode of existence and their whole conception of the world stand in contradiction with the most elementary Christian principles.

It will therefore remain on the whole as Cromwell said, "The cause of Christ goes hand in hand with the cause of the people." The spirit of nobility in the ordinary sense goes no further than a curious hearing of the gospel, or than the attempt to use the gospel for quite other ends than it was meant.

Still less noble than this aristocracy of birth (unless it is also inwardly noble) are, as a rule, the new arrivals into it from the lower classes, who mostly bring with them their inborn servile nature, or the arrogant money-aristocrats who have made themselves rich, but to whom the feeling of the rightfulness of their possessions must be wanting. Of such a man Demosthenes, in one of his finest speeches, asseverates that he was surely the child of some slave spuriously substituted in the place of the real child, and was not in the least fitted to belong in a free state.

All arrogance (even that over one's talents or success) is an unfailing sign of a small soul. Of pride, however, one can not say quite the same. In Dante's great poem it is very noteworthy that it is only inside the gate of grace that release from pride, that is, humility, is imparted to the man who is purifying himself from all his faults; before, he employs his pride in overcoming other and lower sins that conflict yet more with the nobility of the soul.

We can not, then, change this fact, that every genuine aristocracy rests upon the appointment of God, who is the only rightful "lord" upon earth, beside whom there is no other "right of lordship," and who

accepts those as his "vassals of the crown" whom he deems qualified. On the other hand, it is just as undoubted that individualism, the right of mastery over one's own nature and over one's free will so far as it is employed for good ends, is the most inalienable of all human rights, and one that no political democracy can or will ever set aside. To lower this individualism to a mere class or mass consciousness and to a common average of culture is barbarism; to develop it partially and selfishly only for oneself is criminal or insane. Beauty of form has its value and its right in the training of individual men and of whole generations, provided it is developed on the sound basis of the good—as if its blossom. But then it is the most perfect expression of manliness, of virtue in the ancient sense, of that chivalrous spirit of the Middle Ages which to-day is expressed in the word "gentlemanlike," though this word often stands only for an empty mould without real contents. "Gentleness, when it weds to manhood, makes a man." Otherwise not.

"The fear of man bringeth a fall," says the wise Hebrew proverb-writer; "but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall

be safe." That is very much in accordance with experience. The fear of man leads always into by-paths and is ever somewhat petty and ignoble. Yet no one, even the highest and strongest, can forever remain without fear, if he knows no invisible Lord above him on whose protection he may absolutely rely, so long as he acts rightly.

With the fear of men is allied a crowd of other petty vices which all take their origin therefrom. Hate, envy, jealousy, vengeance, resentment, readiness to take offence, malice, injustice in the judgment of others, all as little noble as possible, are nothing but the consequences of fear. Even covetousness, the restless struggle for money and property, often springs not so much from a mad propensity to scrape everything together for oneself alone, as from the necessity (justified if there were no God) of winning and maintaining in the "struggle for existence" a place which never can be sufficiently assured against all mischances, and against all the assaults of a like-minded overwhelming number of enviers and haters of every individual prosperity. Looking at the matter just from the standpoint of covetousness alone (which has its own great inconveniences), if this fear were not present, there would very likely

be no men wholly dispossessed and no social question.

If one would remedy these conditions, otherwise so hopeless, then some must be freed from the fear of being obliged to spend a short life without a just share in the happiness earth has to offer, whereby they are necessarily driven to half-insane exertions to win it by force; and others must be freed from the apprehension lest they shall see all become poor and wretched on account of a new distribution of property equally among all. To desire to mediate between these two opposites by means of palliatives is the fruitless exertion of the hour. Neither attitude of mind, however, has anything noble about it.

A soul that has attained complete nobility, free from fear and resting upon a firm ground of faith, is the most beautiful but also the rarest thing there is now. Very few will arrive at this goal to-day otherwise than by roundabout paths, be it through great doubts or through great sorrows; though to some the way thereto is made easier because of their parentage and ancestry, so that they can already begin to strive after it with the advantage of a better footing.

Yet it remains a sad fact that every child that is born clearly bears upon it the stamp of such a destiny, whose attainability is, with most, more and more lost with advancing age, although a heavy curse hangs over the head of him who draws away from this destiny a single one of the millions endowed with a nature called to the highest things.

Nevertheless, this is actually so, and, as was said at the beginning, it is impossible that there should be none but noble souls on earth; that would be at once the "state of eternal rest." Such a noble and "exclusive" society we picture for the future life, so far as we can imagine that life at all. But there must always be at least a number of people who will not bow the knee to the "Baal" of the hour and just as little desire to live out their lives on a merely natural basis (for this is of the nature of animals); but their only care is, that God may continually dwell upon the earth.

To this, all are called, especially those who belong to the fellowship of Christianity; and if few are actually "chosen," yet they form an élite to which every man has access. This kind of aristocracy will never pass out of existence, and to it undoubtedly belongs the immediate future, the more the democratic reform wins the

upper hand in the life of the nations. But it will also, wherever it is genuine, be ever confirmed and upheld by God. An aristocracy, on the other hand, that no longer has any basis in its nation, is certainly a false or degenerate aristocracy that rightfully falls into decay.

For the genuine aristocracy there is another and a sterner privilege than what are commonly considered privileges. Something more is demanded of it than the continuous longing ordinary souls have for happiness and pleasure. And it is not good for it if it is ever quite absolved of the sorrows which alone keep it in this disposition, or if it succeeds or is disappointed in something that sprang from ordinary motives. The belief in the purifying power of sorrow and therefore in its necessity is always the kernel and centre of all true ethics, whether based upon philosophy or upon religion. The noblest of all earthly lots is sorrow cheerfully borne, and the blessing that springs therefrom for many. And herein lies the key to an otherwise perplexing riddle; and on this account many men, who will have nothing to do with religion, nevertheless stand nearer to it than many who are loud in their religious professions. Whoever can

accept sorrow with a good will and turn it victoriously to the building up of a better nature within him, is and will remain a noble man, with a nature fundamentally religious, much as his reason may resist any positive confession of religious faith. And in this one point lies the unity, which, silently surmounting all limitations, binds the nobler men of every faith and confession.

And so, a noble soul must be able to endure a considerable amount of injustice as it now exists in the world, apparently never to cease; nor will it find a cause of offence either in its own misfortunes or in those of others; nor must it try too carefully to escape a reputation for being somewhat foolish.

It is not always the greatest talents that are adapted to the greatest things. It is very significant that Isaiah says, "Who is blind, saith the Lord, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send?" In the same manner Christ often says that, to be fit for the Kingdom of Heaven, one needs a childlike nature which the unwise are closer to than the wise. And the same thing was shown during the Reformation in the case of many who were the wisest of their time, but could not decide to surrender a

certain "cultured" attitude of open-mindedness and impartiality toward questions of which the learned know, of course, that one can, in any event, "look at it from another point of view." This is yet to-day the narrow defile which very many of the cultured shun to whom Christianity would be quite right, if it only fitted in a little more with the demands of the time, if it only would give up something of its uncompromising attitude in regard to ethics, and something of its absolute demand for faith in respect to things that are transcendental and not to be proved.

Christ himself would undoubtedly in his day have been able to conceive his calling in another way than he did. The story of the temptation was an event such as, once in his life, has happened to every highly gifted man, and for which he could assign place and date. Happy if he then struck the right road and no longer let himself be misled because the whole world was against him. Again and again it has finally been obliged to yield, this "whole world," before a single soul; and we often experience yet to-day, in the smallest as in the greatest questions, the truth of the bold saying, "Who firmly holds to his mind, will fashion the world to himself."

There is therefore always a place and a need in the world for this kind of people, and in this fact they find their modest portion. They have their difficulties, to be sure; but to be without them is neither necessary nor good for them.

Finally, that is a very true word a wise man once spoke, though from an opposite point of view, "In the struggle for existence there is always room above." Only the lower and middle places are overfilled.

Therefore, you who are young or are dissatisfied with your search thus far for happiness, strike at once for the highest goal. In the first place, that is the surest and best way because it is God's will and because he expressly calls you to it. In the second place, it is, of all goals, the one that most brings peace, while all the others bring many disillusionments and bitternesses in their train. And lastly, it is the only one where the race with those contending for the same prize of victory is one with friends and helpers, and where you will not be received at the goal by enviers and secret opponents, but by sincere friends and men of the same high intent — just noble souls, with whom alone it is easy and good to live.

VI. TRANSCENDENTAL HOPE

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HIS earthly life can not be the end of all life; it can not be the final word concerning our destinies, unless they are, even in the most favorable cases, to close with an enigmatic deficit, and with an unexplainable divergence between capacity and accomplishment, between task and performance: this must be evident to every one who carefully reflects upon it, to every one who is unwilling to dismiss such questions curtly, unwilling to accept of death as an all-conclusive, comfortless fate.

The life of every thinking man who does not believe in its continuance after death, ends, therefore, in deep sadness. The decline of all the powers, bodily and mental, fills the heart that knows no further hope with dejection, and with a terror, at times, that no circumstances of earthly fortune can save him from. Even the consideration that the works of a man survive him, or that "when the body shall fall to dust the great name shall still live on," gives him no adequate comfort for the passing away of life itself. Some then forcibly rouse themselves and seek

in feverish activity to use up the last moments of vanishing existence in making sure that others will have something to remember them by, or feel a momentary regret over their loss. In other aging men, on the other hand, once more there awakens with almost elementary force the long-slumbering desire for pleasure in every direction, seeking again to blow into flame the pitiful spark of the fire of life. The end in both cases, however, is a helpless breaking-down in the face of the constantly approaching Unknown, or the banishment of all thoughts on the subject as far as possible, or finally, in the bravest cases, a stoical surrender to an unavoidable fate—unless there is a *hope* that life will continue beyond. Only where such hope is present is Death the friendly-earnest messenger who heralds to the tired wanderer the end of his journey and the soon impending prospect, from a slowly and toilsomely mounted hilltop, into a broad new world; for all others he is the ugly skeleton as represented in the mediæval Dance of Death, or at least the inexorable, cruel Reaper of the very beautiful, but very melancholy poem of Clemens Brentano, "There is a reaper whose name is Death."

Now, for the first, there comes to light

the most remarkable of all the differences between men; now, at the end of life, the "simple fool" comes to a victorious vindication. For while to all others every autumnal falling leaf awakens the feeling of a hopeless passing away, *he* sees, even in the tree stripped bare, the buds already of a new and gracious spring, and he hears, in his last days, not only the unalterable judgment of death, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," but at the same time likewise the word of life, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

II

The attitude of men toward the question of death, the most important of life's questions, is that which best characterizes each one of them, and if one always knew their thoughts about it, one would be able to draw therefrom the most definite conclusions as to their whole conception of life.

The fear of death is also the best test-stone for every philosophy. A philosophy that does not overcome this fear, or at best leads to sad reflections upon the transitoriness of life, is in the first place

of not very much practical value, and in any case does not completely fulfil its purpose. Nor is it even quite consonant with reason; for how could we picture a reasonable condition of man and society, if there were no death? For when the lives of prominent persons have been too prolonged, it has been a manifest misfortune to their fellow-men. Far from being an evil that makes a shrill discord in the universe, death is rather an advantage, the only conceivably possible arrangement under which a world such as ours, in which the good must contend with the evil, can exist.

This at least is certain, that even upon those whose "heart is fortified" against any event, the incompleteness and trouble of life often lies heavily, and that to them this earthly existence seems merely a transitory state from which there must some day be release. Even the happiest life knows such moods, and though one might be entirely satisfied with his own lot, he could not possibly be so for his nation and for the millions of men whose life seems only one long chain of deprivations and blunders that mock at all attempts to help. An old German poet, Heinrich von Laufenburg (1445), already gives expression to this mood in the following verses:

"I would I were at home on high,
And all my worldly toil laid by;
At home above is life deathléss,
And all is joy without distress;
A thousand year make there one day,
And pain and strife are gone for aye.
Then up! my heart and hardihood,
Seek ye the good above all good;
Ye may not stay for long below,
To-day, to-morrow, ye must go.
Farewell, O world! may God thee bless;
I fare to Heaven's happiness."

But neither is this yet the right conception of death. One can also die "full of days," and age is not necessarily a tedious, ever-increasing, hopelessly incurable disease, but it can also be a continuous advancing, an evolving of oneself toward a nobler and a purer life than is possible on this earth. Death is then but the wholly natural and by no means violent and illogical transition into an analogous kind of existence that only needs to be continued; the fruit is ripe, and falls, not to be destroyed, but for a useful harvest.

Moreover, if there is no awakening after death, then those who believe in an awakening will suffer naught from such a delusion, but, without ever being conscious of it,

will share the common human fate of extinction; while, if there is an awakening after death, such an awakening can not be a pleasant thing for those who did not believe in it. This, indeed, is where faith has the advantage, to speak quite practically; for if it should be mistaken, it will fare no worse, in this life or later, than the opposite view; but if it shall find itself on the right path, it will fare better.

III

Still, our hope in a further life is only a hope and not a demonstrable certainty. Yet perhaps it is a well-grounded assurance, resting first of all on the fact that capacities and powers are placed in men for whose complete development human life is too short, and which would therefore be pointless if they did not attain to a further evolution. This is particularly manifest in the case of all men who die young.

Again, we have the very definite testimony of Christ, whose whole conception of life would otherwise rest upon a huge error. The resurrection of the personality is one of the most indubitable and the most definite promises of Christianity, and without it Christianity would have a very dubious amount of truth and a very doubt-

ful value for life; no "resurrection of the body," of course, in the literal sense of the Christian confession of faith, as many conceive it, but in the sense in which Christ, and Paul too on occasion, announced it and in which alone it can satisfy us also. For though we do not wish to lose our individuality, nor rise again, as Job rightly says, as "a stranger to ourselves" (in which case there is no continuation of *our* life and the whole question no longer has any meaning), yet we shall surely not desire to live on with all "the weaknesses of the flesh"; and under any circumstances there is need of a thorough transformation, laying deep hold upon the whole nature of man, a transformation for which the Catholic church, indeed, assumes a special preparatory stage.

The details of this transformed continued life we do not know at all; nor do we know, in particular, how far those who are in that life have any consciousness of their former condition (as, indeed, logically belongs to a continued life, else it is none), nor how far they are in a position to maintain a connection with their kinsmen here. Moreover, we could not apprehend it with our present organs of perception, even if it were to be disclosed to us. Likewise all

descriptions of "eternal glory" (with which the fantasy of men has taken so much pleasure in busying itself), as well as the notion of an "everlasting rest" (which, with our present ideas of rest, we could not endure), are nothing further than fantasy, expressed in impossible, or at any rate in quite imperfect pictures. It is surely possible, we may hope, for the nature of the life to come to be, far beyond all human understanding, greater than all these pictures represent; but it will quite surely be intelligible only for those whose spiritual nature is suited for it and sufficiently purified from everything that tends to decay. That is, in other words, if there is a continued life for all, and if they who have lived for nullities and have not developed their capabilities toward the attainment of things eternal, do not sink into nothingness, then every one surely continues to live in the element to which he truly belongs.

Whether there is then an endless duration of this new state under all circumstances, or whether there are still many separate steps of life, as in our life, and a final purification for all men (the so-called "restoration of all things")—these are questions that no one will ever be able

to answer satisfactorily. Whether there is an eternal punishment of the wicked does not seem to be so very important — less important, at least, than the unending advance of the good ; and whether the wicked believe this, or do not believe, it has no very real influence upon their conduct. The punishment of the resolutely wicked (which many do not see brought about, and so become easily dubious of the existence of divine justice in the world) is particularly this, that they are unable to become better even if in their better moments they wish to do so. They are obliged to remain slaves to their lower nature, and to lose their life without any results worth while and without the hope of an immortality which they could only fear. If that still seems to you to be no satisfactory compensation for the sorrows and deprivations of the good upon earth, then add this fact to the account, that evil men do not experience the love and fidelity of men, the best of all outward things the world has to offer, and without which all their other possessions might well appear worthless, even to him who has them in the greatest fulness. He who loves no one, and whom no one loves, is a poor, lonely man, though he may, in the common

belief, be sitting in the lap of fortune. And things are so arranged that these unhappy men can not understand or value the love which perhaps is still tendered them, but must infallibly lose it again through their own folly. To the things of highest value in human existence, the nearness of God, an inward trust in the good ending of a brave life, and that love and fidelity which can not exist without reciprocal esteem,—to these the evil man never attains. The other things let him enjoy in uneasiness and in the continual fear of the envy and hate of thousands (if that can be called "enjoyment"), and do not begrudge him a happiness that, for much the greater part, exists only in the mistaken idea that others have of it. "*Non ragionam di lor, ma guarda e passa*,"—speak not of them, but look, and pass them by.

As far as concerns our present life and nature, what is necessary (and therefore conceivable) as a reason for our faith, is only this: that without faith (that is, a trust in the transcendental, in what we can not grasp with the senses), we can not carry out the purpose of life in its entirety, nor can we lift ourselves to that plane which, *with* this faith, lies in our power of attainment and therefore becomes our task; that,

further, for the attainment of this plane we need a power of love which is stronger than that which rests on human affections, and which is also very likely the element that creates life and sustains it and that possesses the power to overcome death; and that finally neither this faith nor this love would endure in the face of the enormous obstacles which oppose them on every hand in our earthly existence, if it were not for the glad hope that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."

IV

The most positive fact we really know as to an existence after death is the resurrection of Christ. This is evidence not only historically vouched for (better, indeed, than most so-called "historical facts" of equal antiquity), but also a necessary postulate from a philosophical and ethical point of view, unless the whole history of the world for two thousand years past is to rest upon a delusion, or even, one may say, upon an intentional falsehood. The resurrection is, and will remain, therefore, the foundation both of all true Christianity and of all transcendental hope.

Judging by this resurrection of Jesus, the future life would seem to be somewhat

similar to our present existence, and death accordingly an event of much less importance and, one might properly say, much more a matter of indifference than we usually assume it to be. At any rate, the future life will be an evolution ; neither an everlasting rest in the literal sense, nor everlasting enjoyment. The latter would not be noble enough, and the former appears to us as beautiful only in moments of weariness and not when we are endued with new vigor.

On the contrary, indestructible power of work and joy in work, joined with true depth and clearness of vision as to the ends of life one should pursue, enter, in the case of all divinely guided men, only toward the end of their life, when all seeking for pleasure has ceased ; and this is a very safe indication, both as to the continuation of life itself (that it can not suddenly cease at this stage of development), and as to the nature of that continuation (that it can only be a heightening of the best of our present activities). This is often so clear to the reason that the assumption of a sudden extinction of this activity, just when it has become full of vitality, seems thoroughly unmeaning, and unworthy of the order of the universe

unless it rests upon mere chance; and a cosmical order resting upon chance alone, yet existing for thousands of years, would be a simple impossibility.

Banish from your life, therefore, the melancholy fancy of a helpless sinking beneath the waters, for that is foolishness; but banish likewise too great a contempt of life. Life is no mere vale of sorrow that must be escaped from as soon as possible, but an important, perhaps the most important, part of our whole existence, in which we make our decision for advancing life, or for a gradual and real death. Even the many weak-hearted men of our day who only want to die quickly and "go to heaven" without a struggle, may well find themselves deceived, and that the struggle will yet meet them, but under less favorable conditions. Nor are we to envy the "innocent" children and young people who, in the view of the Greeks, have died early by a special favor of the gods; for they must none the less begin from the beginning. It is through conflict and many troubles of every sort that we must attain to the perfection which is our present task. This perfecting process alone opens the hard and unreceptive heart sufficiently to receive the noble seed

of a higher conception of life, a seed that must be sown in the heart, and first spring up, then grow, then blossom, and at last bear fruit. This life-process may neither be hastened nor avoided, but it must be gone through. It is therefore reasonable that we should not be eager for death, even if we do not fear it, but we may justly rejoice only over what we have already happily gone through and now, for all eternity, no longer need to experience and endure.

When one once believes firmly in a continuation of existence that alone supplies our present life with an intelligible solution of all its questions and riddles, then a bit more or less enjoyment or pain during this short span of imperfect existence becomes more a matter of indifference, and much that was important before falls away from us as a form without meaning; while, if these thoughts are untrue, and if this is the only world, full as it is of injustices, sorrows, and passions, it is a simple impossibility to believe in a just and almighty God. Upon this single point, therefore, hangs our entire philosophy of life.

To me, the continuation of existence is a certainty, but its form inconceivable;

only it will be similar to our present life in its purest moments, and will surely be no sudden leap into a quite different spiritual condition, but a continuation, in which each man can receive only that for which he has become ripe here. The difference will therefore, perhaps, be smaller than is commonly thought.

But the scientists are quite right in denying immortality to a soul that is simply a function of physical organs. Whatever in our nature can be comprehended by the methods of natural science can not possibly be immortal, but passes into annihilation, or rather into dissolution and change, just as surely as any other object in the physical world. But there is apparently something else in man besides bones, muscles, sinews, veins, and nerves, and this something else can be embodied again in some other form. And this seems to me relatively more conceivable than a sudden and complete annihilation of the spiritual life.

Death, in itself, is therefore nothing terrible, nor even something undesirable, and whoever still fears it is certainly not yet upon the right path of life. The only fearful thing is the backward glance, when

one is old, upon a life quite perverted and useless, or upon a great accumulation of guilt unforgiven.

Not we shall pass away, but the present world shall pass away: this is the one great thought which must lift us above all the terrors of uncertainty. The other bright point in this darkness which the understanding alone can not illumine, is the thought that the Lord of all existence, whom we have already learned to know here as a sure friend, must be quite the same for us there also as he was here, only still nearer joined to us and still clearer known.

His voice—and this all know who have once stood near the dark exit-gate of this life—his voice we shall be able to hear at last, when all else has already sunk away behind us. Then, only one step further, and

> "*I hope to see my pilot face to face,*
> *When I have crossed the bar.*"

VII. THE PROLEGOMENA OF CHRISTIANITY

VII. THE PROLEGOMENA OF CHRISTIANITY

HE cardinal fault of Christianity, which has persisted from generation to generation for centuries, is perhaps this: that Christianity has for long been no genuine, vigorous conviction of all those who bear its name, but only a general notion of somewhat the same meaning as "humanity" or "civilization." Thus year after year many thousands are received into its formal constituency without ever in their lives receiving a correct idea of its demands, or a firm trust in its promises, or, least of all, any definite resolution and will to hold themselves in duty bound by these demands and promises. The "Christian" nations distinguish themselves from the non-Christian in much the same way as the ancient "Greeks" distinguished themselves from the "Barbarians"; and the Christian faith has grown to be a special confession *within* the borders of Christendom; while quite other convictions, never shared by Christ and his first confessors, and conceptions of the world which claim an equal right in a "Chris-

tian" state, venture to stand opposed to Christianity.

We may leave it undecided whether this is a fate that overtakes every religion which ripens into a "world-religion," but may nevertheless doubt whether the formation of such a world-religion by means of a great attenuation of all religious demands ever lay in the original meaning and task of Christianity; even if one may grant that, even in this form it has been a magnificent tool of civilization and, in fact, is still such.

Yet it is certain that this course of evolution was dimly felt, even by the first generation of Christians, as an unavoidable though deplorable fate, and that the formal victory of the Christian religion over the heathen cults in the Roman Empire, and the consequent transformation into a Roman state religion, brought into it an element that Christ himself, before Pilate, the Roman governor of Judæa, had disavowed in the most distinct manner. All which has since been called "the Church," or "the relations between the Church and the State," and which has taken up so great a space in the thoughts of the nations, has, as an organization, no support in the original records of Christianity; indeed, it

often almost seems as though the attainment of a definite goal of human development and the consequent end of the present age of the world were dimly surmised by the early Christians to be nearer than proved possible, in the sequel. The Kingdom of God is wholly founded upon the freedom of the human will, and it depends on that with what speed and intensity Christianity will or can come to realization in an individual, or in a nation, or in an epoch.

It is a serious article of belief with the Protestant group of churches, that not merely in a general way, but for every single individual during his earthly life, Christianity is to be realized through a "church"; this "church" stands for the continuous visible embodiment of Christianity, and accordingly it receives the individual into its constituency as a mere unit in the totality, in order that it may furnish him a safe passage through the judgment that shall finally take place on all the deeds of men. And this does not prevent many men, in all the Christian communions, from believing that membership in these communions is the chief matter; and they busy themselves about the fundamental conditions of such a mem-

bership only for a couple of hours on Sundays.

This accounts for the title of this chapter. For we are going to ask, not what belongs dogmatically to the Christian doctrine, but what kind of preliminary dispositions are required in the human intellect and will before we can accept and understand the teachings of Christianity. In this sense they are "prolegomena." If some reader, after going through this chapter, should say that the very substance of Christianity itself lies therein, I shall not disturb him in his conception; for his conception would at any rate do him less harm than the other view, which would declare these preliminaries to be too difficult, or not necessary, for entrance into the church of Christ.

These first steps are quite easily outlined in a few words: first, to regard God as an actual existence and not as a mere philosophical idea of the schools, — and then, in consequence, to fear him alone and to serve him alone — to have no other idols beside him, neither men, nor possessions, nor glory; secondly, to love the men among whom one is placed "as oneself," as Christ says, in practical words

we can understand — not often more than oneself apparently, and as a matter of fact, in most cases less; thirdly, not to devote one's life to pleasure even of the so-called "noblest" sorts, nor, on the other hand, to suffering, to mere asceticism, — but to surrender oneself to the doing of the will of God, in the firm confidence that this must be practicable, though not through one's own moral power, yet through the divine help and grace; and, fourthly, if any one should at first doubt whether all this is possible for man, to believe that, so far as concerns himself, the matter lies only in his *will*, the only thing he can, but must, contribute thereto.

These are the "prolegomena" of Christianity which every one must consider, before he resolves, upon reaching his years of discretion, to make a real entrance into the Christian life, instead of going forward upon the broader way, easier at the first, but sure to be unsatisfactory in the end.

If he does not consider these things, or if he relies upon his own strength in the conduct of life because he trusts in the possibility of an ethical uplifting tendency already present in human nature

and does not think he needs any transcendental support, then he is either like the man in the Gospel who built a house upon the sand which stood only as long as the weather was fair, or like that other who began to build a tower which afterward he could not finish.

Or if he finds these demands too high-pitched, then, even under the best conditions, there springs up in him that consumptive, anæmic, half-hearted Christianity which is forever evading the urgings of conscience and is consequently always dissatisfied—that hypocritical and unlovely Christianity which we all know only too well.

It is not necessary to say much in "explanation" of these demands. The requirements of the Christian religion are not usually lacking in clearness; it is the human will that is lacking in the resoluteness to accept them. It much prefers to have them explained away.

Belief in God is naturally the first and the most necessary preliminary stipulation of Christianity, without which it does not exist, or is but an empty dissembling name for an entirely different way of

thinking. This is also the case when the word "God" is accepted as a designation for the totality of all things, or the Absolute Being, or, as with most adherents of "deism," as an expression for a something that exercises no influence upon worldly things, but somehow exists only as the law that in the beginning created the universe, but is now forever unchangeable; where it itself came from and why it no longer continues vital and active, no one can tell.

To be sure, we can not explain a "living" God, as we have often already said. All explanations or so-called proofs of God are defective, both the positive and the negative. It is not worth the trouble to linger over them. God is something that can not be explained, but he is not something that can not be experienced. But he is to be experienced only by those who "keep his laws," and one may be practically quite sure that those people who will not do this are atheists at bottom, in spite of all their asseverations; just as there are men, on the other hand, whom God probably still regards as his followers, though we have ourselves long given up regarding them as such.

The experience of God expresses itself

thus: first, in spiritual tranquillity, satisfaction, quieting of the thirst for truth (as Christ calls it), a sort of strengthening of the spirit and of the inner life such as is vainly to be attained in any other way, whether through philosophy, or through a refusal to think at all about such things; second, in inward serenity which, gained in any other way, is not so long-enduring; and finally, in a general deeper intensity of life, the effective cause of physical and spiritual health and so of the manifold blessing which springs from this belief in God, both for individuals and for nations.

It is this blessing that is showing itself when all one's circumstances, apparently of their own motion, so shape themselves that what is truly excellent (the furthering of the inner, the protection of the outer life) always prevails, and danger is averted; on the other hand, no travelling in byways, no wrong actions, are attended with good results. The latter is the usual punishment of evil men, whereby they are hardened and kept from turning to a better life. It is also the ever-visible means of distinguishing between the divine blessing and that outwardly similar worldly "good-fortune" in which even the shrewdest of men often

put an inconceivable and quite groundless confidence, until, sometime or other, it leaves them in the midst of dire difficulties; for the most part at the very moment when they believed they had definitely secured it and had attained to the proud summit of their desires. Men are never faithful to the mere "children of fortune," but only to their fortune; while they can not, if they wanted to, oppose those endowed with the divine blessing.

On this point the Old Testament contains many positive assurances and many actual examples, and it may in general be said that for the presentation of the Laws of God the New Testament alone would not suffice; nor is that its purpose, for it always implies a knowledge of the Old Testament.

"The man who keepeth my laws shall thereby live," is the sum of these promises. For these laws are the principle of life itself, and to ignore them is to come within the jurisdiction of death. That may be put to the test, and ought to be put to the test, if it is done with a sincere desire to know what to believe, and if it is not continually repeated after one has once gained a sufficiently clear knowledge. But for those who will not do even that there is

nothing left save to make for themselves other gods "to go before them."

These gods are, as a rule, human beings or the products of their mind in some form,—once again to-day, as in the period of the so-called Renaissance, preëminently in the form of art. Great crudeness of morals and the absence indeed of all ethical conceptions may go hand in hand with the finest and highest culture in this special direction, thus showing that art can not be the highest goal men can strive for and attain. We ought not to have had to experience this for the second time, though it is often to be feared that we are now doing so.

We should never make idols for ourselves of even the dearest and best men, not to speak of those who are highly gifted or hold a high place in the world's esteem. Not only the New Testament, but even the Old, lays down in a very practical way the proper and easily recognized limit; for they prescribe that we are to love God "above all," and men "as ourselves," no more and no less. Even the simplest person can easily compute this; and if in certain exuberant, "heavenly" moments of life it seems too little, yet, taking one's whole life into account, it is really more

than any of us perform, and at any rate is much more salutary for our neighbor.

The opposite quality to "reliance upon men" is (what at first seems unlikely) sympathetic compassion; when reliance departs, compassion enters to heal. This is something quite different from what is ordinarily called "love to men," and is much more. It is something, too, that does not naturally lie within us; we have to learn it, usually late in life and through troublous paths. But when a man has it, then it is henceforth sure that he is "fit for the Kingdom of God."

If it is not men and their works, then it is possessions, ambition, or the continuous search for enjoyment that stands most in the way of that sincere union of the human soul with the divine spirit which necessarily forms the foundation of all Christianity; — above all, it is the "deceitfulness of riches," as the Gospel well calls it, the very common delusion that possession and happiness are identical, a delusion from which the man first awakes when he holds in his hands that for which he was striving and for which he had often sacrificed body and soul; and now for the first he discovers that, looked at closely,

it was not, even on the best interpretation, worth all this exertion.

In the Gospel are found these words of Jesus: Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth; ye can not serve God and Mammon; whosoever he be of you that renounces not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple. If I were an adherent of the atheistic Socialism of our day, I would constantly hold up these sayings of their Lord and Master before the sincere followers of Christianity, who are by far the most dangerous opponents of Socialism; for if they should obey these sayings, without any further effort the solution of the social question would follow. But there are many passages of the Bible which are almost divested of their value because of a kind of disqualifying law of customary usage; or they are at least not spoken of in religious circles, because they have little that is "edifying" for many of those present.

If we must admit that such passages designate the goal or ideal toward which we should strive, rather than that to which every one can at once attain, we should, nevertheless, keep our eyes continually upon it and have the earnest will to make our way thither; else all the other messages

of the Gospel profit us nothing and are for us as if they were not there.

To speak practically, then, one must never fix his heart upon possessions, nor regard them as the most important thing to be lived and striven for, nor make them the measure of his valuation of men and circumstances, nor be unready or disinclined to diminish them at any time for the sake of God or the common good, and if necessary even to give them up altogether. They who can do this when it is required of them are the only men who are free and worthy of God's kingdom. At different times in life they will often be put to this test, and if this has never yet happened, it is no good sign for their inner life or for their standing in God's grace. Often it goes no farther than the testing of their will, and when the will has surrendered, God does not require of them the actual deed, or he lets the trial so shape itself that in the end it is the more easily endurable. Sometimes, however, as with Job, it comes to a real loss of all one's goods; and not always is there finally a double compensation therefor, but there always is a complete consolation for what one has done, provided one will seek for it and not merely helplessly and weakly bewail.

In order always to have the mastery of oneself and to put this to the proof, it may often be a good thing, even before one resolves upon Christianity, to make the test of Polycrates, who cast a much-treasured ring into the sea. Try it once, this surrender of your dearest possession; though, to be sure, the test will in most cases come to you unbidden, if it is your lot to become a free man by God's grace instead of a slave to Mammon. But no matter how it comes to you, if you have shown yourself able to make this surrender, you will be set free from the strongest fetter with which the spirit of the world keeps man bound; the rest of your possessions will henceforth become more a matter of indifference to you. Of course, in this question of possessions, the concern is rather with the spirit and the will than with the mere deed. One can also "possess as though he possessed not" (though the possibility of deception here is very great), and if one no longer spends anything for mere enjoyment or luxury, but applies everything to useful ends, not counting among such ends the mere senseless heaping up of possessions for heirs and successors down to the remotest ages, then one may believe his actions respond to the

real meaning of the words of Christ. We at least will not cast the first stone at those who so comport themselves.

One good help in this, besides the firm resolve to forego all luxury, is, as already explained in a former chapter, systematic giving; another is, to reckon and calculate as little as possible, and to busy oneself as little with money as is compatible with a necessary order in one's business and private affairs. For money has an evil charm about it like that of philosophical heresy; neither will easily let a man go again when once he has become much involved in them.

Glory is for many just as strong a fetter as mammonism—not only the excessive eagerness for the ordinary human and civic honors (exposed though they always are to the judgment of contemporaries or, in the greater instances, of posterity) but also the anxiety for respectability. As to the former, Paul, one of the most abused of men, has left us a very good statement in 1 Cor. iv. 3 ff.; and that any one loses the regard of his citizens quite without blame is really much rarer than is commonly supposed. On the other hand, God often enough makes one's former enemies to be

those who become the most satisfied with him, and the prophetic words of Isaiah come splendidly to take the place of the earlier underestimation: "And the sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet." But one must be able to endure things if he is to adopt Christianity; those too-sensitive Christians who crave the esteem of even those they do not themselves esteem only show that the world and its praise are still far from being enough a matter of indifference to them.

The real positions of honor are, after riches, the most dangerous thing there is for faith; on this point the Gospel leaves not the least doubt. Whoever runs into this danger quite of his own free will, even perhaps with eager zeal, quite commonly perishes therein, so far as concerns his better and only worthful life. But whoever, by his calling or by his lot, is compelled to accept such positions and yet would like to become or remain a Christian, has every cause to be watchful, and to be thankful for occasional humiliations, an article in which, happily, the world seldom lets him be lacking.

For the greater number of men in the ordinary situations of life the hardest part in the prolegomena of Christianity is perhaps the conquering of one's desire for pleasure. The humbler classes often escape this desire with still less success than do the wealthy and the aristocratic, who may have learned, through experience, to place a better estimate upon the worth or worthlessness of the pleasures of the material life. One often finds in the lower classes a much more unrestrained passion for pleasure, which, joined with the atheistic mood they purposely cultivate, sometimes degenerates into a true savagery and makes them like animals, and animals not of the noblest sort, either.

But unfortunately the upper strata of society often enough lead the way by their own bad example. They often complain of the love of pleasure and the frivolity of the serving classes; but things would go better if the servants did not perceive in their masters the same propensities that restlessly agitate them.

Pleasure set up as a rule of life, sensuousness (taken in the widest sense) established as the controlling power in the life of a man — this is the infallible death of all faith in transcendent things. These

two powers, pleasure and faith, do not long exist side by side in a man, but the one or the other must leave the field. Happy he in whom it is the power of the sensual element that retreats before that of the spiritual, vigorously striving for the mastery. For every victory over the love of pleasure (what is not otherwise always the case on the so-called path of virtue) brings at once its own reward in an increased vigor of the ideal life, and often in a broad spiritual progress in the wider sense. We can truthfully say that the most of the great advances in the inner life are ushered in by some renunciation which brings its own compensation.

That to the love of pleasure all sorts of attractive names are given and that it in truth assumes now finer, now coarser, forms, should not lead us astray. It is, nevertheless, under all circumstances, that trait in us which most resembles animal nature and forthwith reveals its ignoble character in the fact that it is always united with egotism and the exploitation of others for our own selfish inclinations. The partial naïveté of the ancient world is wanting in humanity now, for their eyes have been opened to its meaning ; and a universal failure to conquer the love of pleasure

through higher interests would, in these days, be an unprecedented and quite impossible relapse of humanity into an earlier age.

With the pursuit of pleasure dies the inclination for riches and honor, which are partly only means in that pursuit and not ends in themselves; and instead there springs up joy in work, the best salvation from all evil, that otherwise always surrounds and tempts a man in one way or another. For when the pursuit of pleasure disappears as a rule of life, then a man must work, or the world is too dreary. On the other hand, with the pursuit of pleasure as his innermost spring of action, a man will always look upon work as only a means, and a disagreeable one, to the attainment of pleasure.

That one may, nevertheless, find an artless enjoyment in the beauty of nature, in the serene succession of the days and the years, in one's family and in true friendship, in uplifting art and science, in the life and welfare of his nation, even in the inoffensive animal and plant worlds, and, above all, in all the great and good activities that are going on in the whole realm of humanity — all this is to be taken entirely for granted. Indeed, a keen sensi-

tiveness to such things is a sure mark of an unspoiled temperament, and especially of years of youth purely spent, a youth that has not, by poisonous pleasures, prematurely deadened its feeling for the true and harmless joys of life.

Furthermore, an excessive repression of the life of the body is certainly not advantageous for spiritual progress — still less is it a divine command, but it is rather, whenever it appears, merely a human device with no decisive value. On this point a thoughtful commentator of the oldest biblical records says, very truly, that men always have a tendency to heighten the commands of God, which are themselves properly meted and adapted to men's capabilities; and that, in the Old Testament narrative of the first trial of obedience, God did not say that Adam and Eve should not touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but only that they should not eat of its fruit; it was Eve herself who added the further prohibition, "neither shall ye touch it," and by so doing placed the Tempter in the desired position of making an alleged divine command manifestly untrue on its face, because the mere touch of the tree did not cause death. (Genesis ii. 17, and iii. 3, 4.)

Thus it is, indeed, with many exaggerated and unnecessary commands which parents lay upon their children or churches upon their adherents, the non-fulfilment of which they then with equal facility overlook.

An exact and literal obedience to all the real divine commands, which are all practicable, and a thorough scorn and disregard for all the "commandments of men" — this is the only way by which our Christian confessions could now bring themselves new life.

Even the inclination to undergo suffering and renunciation is somewhat dangerous, and the more so because it is often joined with a secret desire for praise, in which case one devil is but supplanted by another, perhaps still more powerful. A man should not throw away his life, not even by a lingering neglect of his powers; only, he should not overvalue his body's well-being nor put it too much in the foreground.

Christ himself is in this respect an inimitable example of a simple moderation which, at times, allowed itself to enjoy an almost luxurious homage, as in the case of the box of precious ointment, which evi-

dently made Judas, the apostle of literal asceticism, to lose faith in him. Even the most advanced Christian should live quite like a natural man, not like a hermit or a pillar-saint, and should seek the worth and purpose of life neither in pleasure nor in suffering and renunciation, but only in the carrying out of the will and commission of God. A wise saying of Blumhardt's, often quoted, declares that one must be twice converted, once from the natural to the spiritual life, and then back again from the spiritual to the natural so far as is justified; but that this is, perhaps, accomplished in some cases at a single stroke, without a preliminary exaggeration of the spiritual nature. Many linger too long in this double mutation, and during this period afford no very agreeable spectacle.

Finally, one's own power can never set the upward-striving man free from all those enemies of his real happiness which keep him, in a very genuine sense, from entering into true Christianity. The "old Adam" is still to-day, as at the time when the expression was first used, "too strong for the young Melanchthon," and all good resolutions give as good as no help, so

long as the man will not lay hold on the aid sent us by God himself to that end. But even he can not help unless the man completely surrenders his will. This is the man's share in the work of his liberation from the fetters of the natural, selfish life; everything else is done to him.

Dante, in particular, explains this very clearly in the twenty-first canto of the *Purgatorio*, where the joyous trembling of the mountain of purification, when a soul finally rises into its higher region, is portrayed in the following verses:

"*It trembles when any spirit feels itself*
So purified that it may rise, or move
For rising; and such loud acclaim ensues.
Purification by the will alone
Is proved, that, free to change society,
Seizes the soul rejoicing in her will.
Desire of bliss is present from the first;
But strong propension hinders, to that wish
By the just ordinance of heaven opposed—
Propension now as eager to fulfil
The allotted torment as erewhile to sin.
And I, who in this punishment had lain
Five hundred years and more, but now have felt
Free wish for happier clime."

Every one acquainted with his inner life will confirm that for a long time at first a partial will toward the good fought in him

with inclinations of which he very well knew that they would bring him just suffering. So long as the soul is, nevertheless, unable to conquer this desire, it will remain in essentially its former state. But if it holds on to the impulse to freedom notwithstanding, by God's grace there will come a memorable day on which it will at last feel in itself the fully determined will to move forward, and then forthwith it is free, and afterward does not understand how it could have delayed so long.

Yet it would not be right to wait inactive till the will is thus fully determined. Christianity, like many another thing, is learned only through trial, not through study. On the contrary, idly talking about it is most foreign to its spirit, and so-called learned explanations easily make it but darker and more dubious; that is a "science" which, like every other, one may leave entirely in the hands of those who are called thereto, and which very often contributes nothing of moment to their spiritual advancement. Christianity is surely completely understood only through that spirit which the Gospel calls the Holy Spirit. What that is, we do not know; we can only know that it is a very real phenomenon which becomes manifest in its

effects upon our life, and which can gradually make us more and more indifferent toward everything that the world considers as the greatest possessions and the most indispensable pleasures. To this freedom we are called, and it has been made possible through Christianity — what before might well seem very doubtful. But we are not done when we have found Christianity "interesting" — often because of its extravagances rather than because of its real sobriety in the conception of man and his natural powers; we must above all things make a beginning, and then progress therein comes quite of itself.

Therefore, O soul, thou who, from the mazy gardens of the common life of the world that no longer wholly satisfy, hast arrived at happiness by this simplest and best of all roads, but nevertheless still standest, somewhat trembling, before the actual entry into the forecourts of Christianity itself (perhaps because thou seest there a company that does not fully awaken thy confidence), take thy resolution notwithstanding, and dare! It will not be long before thou seest at least enough to have made thy daring seem worth while. It is but rarely that any one turns back again from this road, and

never yet, for thousands of years, has any one who has travelled it quite to the end, lifted up complaints of a wasted life, or even of an existence too hard to be borne.

But how many there are to-day who complain, on the other roads to happiness!

No one who is willing to confess the truth can deny that in every human soul, even in one already resolutely set toward faith in transcendental things, serious doubts can now and then arise as to the reality of all its conceptions and hopes. They who most vehemently condemn such temporary doubts in others are not the ones who are the best confirmed in the faith, for by such zeal they are often only seeking forcibly to suppress their own doubts. But in such moments, thus much remains sure, that there is no certainty anywhere to be found as to the great questions of the present and future life, better than that which Christianity affords, and that there is no adequate satisfaction to be found in trying to content oneself with only the results of "natural science," many of which are still very uncertain; while one simply banishes from

his thoughts all further questions, as to the interrelation of all things in a higher sense, and as to the moral laws of the universe, — questions on which the life and welfare of humanity most of all depend. That will never succeed for long; after every such period of a bare realism which limits itself to a smaller aim, in all men not wholly superficial, not wholly submerged in the world of sense, there arises with irresistible power the impulse to investigate anew whether and how far the high pretension of Christianity to be the real, the unique truth, and the only truth that brings happiness, is a just pretension.

This impulse you also will more or less experience; otherwise you would not have taken in your hand this book, which had its origin in that same impulse. In no case thrust the impulse back from the threshold; for it springs from the better part of your nature.

Accept, rather, one more bit of counsel: First consider more closely the "prolegomena" of Christianity — those preliminary truths which it considers to be self-evident; its dogmas take account of only afterward, when you have already been able to resolve to live up to these pre-

liminary truths with all the power you have. The reverse way is, to be sure, the more usual one, and it is the one to which we are wont to be directed in our schools and churches. But if this more usual course is taken, now and then there lies "a lion in the way" which does not appear upon the path proposed in this chapter.

The power of resolve, of course, you will always be obliged to have, for only "he who overcometh shall inherit all things;" for the irresolute, as well as for those completely without faith, even in the most favorable case only the decay of their personal life stands in near and certain prospect.

VIII. THE STEPS OF LIFE

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T is an old and obvious fancy, that of dividing the inner life into a series of steps, or of describing it in the allegorical form of a pilgrimage with its various stages and halts and hindrances of one sort or another. Yet I do not know of any such description that suits the needs of our own day, especially the needs of people of culture; indeed, it is, and has ever been, a fault of most sermons that while they depict life's attainable ideal with more or less exactness, they are noways able to give as plain an account of the way thither. Yet this is just the service (and the directions should be quite specific, too) which the church, it would seem, is called upon to perform for the present generation. What is known by the somewhat distasteful name of "the cure of souls," so far as it exists at all, has become too professional (not to say too commercial) a matter with the churches: in the things of the spirit there is nothing if not freedom and individuality; yet it is just here that a kind of rigid technical nomenclature has been devised, with expressions that once may have been justified,

but are now meaningless to many men and at some future time will have to be replaced, perhaps, by others.

Of the writings we possess on the unfolding of the inner life by steps, only one has come down to us from classical times; this is an essay of Plutarch, the Greek professor of philosophy (as we should now call him), who was born at Chæronea in Bœotia about 50 A.D., and died between 120 and 130 A.D. at Rome, where, among other things, he is said to have been the teacher of the future emperor Hadrian. Of his hundred and more writings, some shorter, some longer, the "Parallel Lives" are now almost the only ones read, and even these are less read in the schools than is perhaps proper. Of the rest, which are usually comprised under the general title of "Plutarch's Ethical Writings," one of the most readable is that dedicated to Sosius Senecio, consul under Trajan, — "How One may be Conscious of his Progress in Goodness." On the whole, it exhibits the Eclectic view (in the sense of Ciceronian Eclecticism) as contrasted with the teachings of the Stoics, who only recognize the perfect wise man who observes their principles, on the one hand, and on the

other, the man addicted to vice, without intervening transitional grades. In this treatise, as each reader will at once notice, there is a special lack of the depth which first came into morals through Christianity (then but little known as yet), and which will always come into morals only by that path; but it possesses in considerable degree a sound and natural human good-sense, which is directed toward the nobler things of life, and whose development in youthful temperaments is an indispensable purpose in so-called classical culture.

Of the later writings of this kind the best are Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," a book from the great Puritan days in England, and the "Homesickness" of Jung-Stilling, written about a hundred years ago. In reality, the biographies of distinguished men should render this service of pointing out the way to their contemporaries and successors; but there are, unhappily, but few good and really true writings of this sort. For the biographers do not always understand the inmost experiences of those whose lives they are describing, many of which experiences really can not be made comprehensible to them in their full significance, since they were small occurrences with great conse-

quences. Yet the autobiographies, which could tell all this, are usually marred with vanity and are sometimes the least true of biographies. It will therefore be well, on the whole, to recognize that in all these writings the individual character preponderates and that there is no "method" that reveals the proper course of life. The most useful thing about them, perhaps, is the very practical observations that might serve to encourage the wanderer on this much-travelled, yet universally unknown, way when he is likely to become weary, or to enlighten him when the continuation of the journey appears too uncertain or too much deflected from the presumably proper direction.

It is first of all to be said that every life has steps, and that no life runs from beginning to end in unchanging uniformity like a clear, murmuring meadow-brook, or in a straight direction, like an artificially contrived canal. But no life perfectly resembles another in its course, and even the apparently most natural steps often happen in the reverse order, so that there are men who in their youth are preternaturally wise, and have their youthful qualities only when old.

Yet there is never an inwardly healthy human life that shows no visible development at all, or that has spurts or pauses in it that are wholly arbitrary. A life that proceeds in a perfectly normal way is just as rare, but in every life there are mistakes that could have been avoided, and gaps that later it is no longer possible to fill out.

For every period in life has its purpose and its task. In spring the tree must do little more than grow and blossom, but not bear fruit as yet. The fruits one produces on the modern dwarfed trees, purposely hindered in their natural growth and designed merely for a speedy production of fruit, acquire neither the good quality nor, apparently, the soundness of fruits ripened on trees that have attained their natural full growth.

The various periods of life, then, must deposit and store away in the human being each a product peculiar to itself; in childhood the childlike nature, without which a man never becomes a well-rounded man, exerting a kindly influence upon other men; in youth that freshness and enthusiasm of spirit which begets the power of doing things; in manhood and womanhood the fulness and ripeness of all the

thoughts and feelings, and the firmness that springs from a character steeled by deeds already achieved. Only thus can age also do its worthy task, not in falling into disconsolate decay, but in the quiet possession and contemplation of what life was and should be, and in the preparation for a greater and broader development.

Whoever skips any such period, or, as is more frequently the case, hastens over it and makes no use of its peculiar advantages, will seldom or never be in a position to retrieve it later, but will always have a very perceptible deficiency in his make-up.

To prevent this in younger years is a matter of education, of which I will not speak here, but in later life it is one of the chief aspects of that self-training to which a man is indebted for the real acquisitions of life more than to all the things that others can do for him.

In reference to its general character, in the aspect which one usually calls happiness or unhappiness, or a hard or easy lot, experience shows (and in most cases very plainly) that every life consists of three divisions, of which the first and the third are alike and the second unlike. Whoever

has had a hard, unhappy youth is more likely to have a more favorable and successful manhood, but scarcely a cloudless end. On the other hand, when the days of youth are golden, they are almost always the precursor of exertions and storms in the middle part of life, on which there follows a quieter evening of age. Oftentimes this distinction also holds good for the minor steplike subdivisions of these three great divisions.

Which is the happier case may well be doubtful. Very energetic men fond of activity, who are substantially minded not to let "the vestiges of their earthly days vanish in the æons," will be disposed to lay the greater value upon a successful manhood; but sunny-natured men need an untroubled youth and likewise a rougher middle period, if they are to be strong enough to exhibit in their age the pattern of a fully ripened life, perfected in every direction, so far as lies in the power of man. Once in his life, at any rate, a man must have it hard and heavy if he is to attain to the right way himself and to gain an understanding of the burdens of others; and on the whole a strong old age is best suited for that. And if the childhood days have been joyous, they afford an afterglow

for the whole life, and in the reverse case, a bitter feeling of wrong. It is likewise difficult to be obliged, for the first time, to bear the hardest lot of all in old age.

One can not change the form of this lot; in this respect, at least, a man is surely not the moulder of his own happiness; only, he is not the inert slave of a blind Fate either. That is, if a hard youth predestines him to an old age not quite without care, he can make the best of this destiny by a clear and conscious submission and a courageous endurance; or if he has a beautiful childhood behind him, he can be thankful that it did not continue on thus into that stormy period of later life which is necessary for the steeling of his character. Thus conceived, even in these destinies the bold saying turns out to be exactly true, that to those who love God all the events of life, of whatever sort they may be, must turn out to their advantage. But in the lives of all thinking men the question to be decided is this: whether to choose much sorrow with much help from God, or much sorrow without such help, but with the temporary forgetfulness of momentary pleasure. The impotent Nietzschean revolt against such a fate for men helps nothing.

Finally, one can not make of himself

something quite different from the native stuff that is in him. It is not proper that every one should be able to become everything; a very extended many-sidedness comes often only at the expense of depth. At the proper time rightly to criticise oneself in order to correct the many errors of education, which only very rarely estimates a human being quite correctly — this is the chief task of the most decisive point of life. This point, if life has proceeded quite normally, is at the beginning of the thirties, when the man has the last step of education behind him, and now, "in the midway of this our mortal life," begins his self-training, for good or for bad. At this moment of life some recognize, with deep pain of soul, that they can not become all that to which the dreams of youth or the advantages of birth and education seemed to destine them, and they turn in despair to pleasure or to pretence. But others resolutely seek the point whence they may conquer their special world, and henceforth pursue a destiny which, perhaps, was not sung to them at their cradle, but which shows itself, nevertheless, to be the right one.

On the whole, however, the dreams of youth are not to be despised. In most

cases they point to an unconscious native ability and so likewise to the dreamer's destination, which expresses itself at first in fantastic pictures of the future ; that is, in so far as they really come from within and are not the products of a false education or of a mistaken belief in the inheritance of talents. For it is only quite rarely that talents are inherited and that the sons of great men are themselves great. This is, to be sure, often made difficult for them because of comparison with their fathers, and not less because of the jealousy of men, who do not willingly suffer intellectual dynasties to rule among them ; in this they are all republicans. On the other hand, men of much consequence seldom have or take the time to busy themselves intently with the bringing up of their children, and in such families, much oftener than in far simpler ones, the children fall into neglect, unless a mother of sufficient intelligence steps in, and is not herself too much busied with her celebrated and often very exacting husband.

It is scarcely necessary to say further that the mothers are the deciding element of the family for the education and the formation of the character of the children, especially the sons, and that the sons, as a

rule, take after them more than after the fathers. It is a less familiar fact that the sons often resemble the mother's brothers in character and natural ability, and that the best though sometimes also the most dangerous moulders of one's youth are the grandmothers on the mother's side.

The promise of a curse upon families that have shown themselves egotistical for several succeeding generations surely comes true ; and experience shows that a want of love towards one's parents is avenged through one's own children, and, *vice versa*, a peculiar blessing throughout life accompanies those who have shown their parents much love.

There is no need to be anxious about the proper time for entering upon new steps of life, if the earlier ones have been rightly used; they will then do their own announcing through first an inner summons, and finally a definite determination, to advance farther, and without this experience it could not be well for any one to be in a higher plane. We can not stand a task that is yet too great for us; such a task we feel to be too ethereal, and we long for the coarser elements of life. On the other hand, the divinely-led man does not as a rule know very long beforehand what

he has to do next or to what he will be called; he could not commonly endure it. But any one who has already really experienced many such instances of being personally guided in life will at last be sure in his faith as to the existence of such a higher guidance even in the life of individual men, while others (by their own fault, to be sure) count only in the mass, not as individuals.

Finally, steps in the inner life are not, of course, for those to whom life means nothing else than eating and drinking and dying to-morrow. The steps of the inner life exist rather only for those who are resolved to struggle out of a merely natural existence common to many others, on through to a really spiritual life.

For these, Thomas à Kempis points out the safest way in the following dialogue:

My Son, the perfect freedom of the spirit thou canst not win nor keep, if thou press not through to the complete renunciation of thyself.

Slave-chains are borne by all who cling to something selfishly, who love themselves, who desire the outer world with eagerness and longing and curiosity, who seek the things that flatter the senses and not the things that further the Kingdom of Christ, who will always build and strengthen what yet hath no founda-

tion ; for everything falleth into nothingness that is not born of God.

Hold thyself to this short saying, for it meaneth much : Forsake all, and thou findest all.

Bid farewell to every desire ; then enterest thou upon rest. Let this word never leave thy thoughts ; bear it within thee day and night ; and when thou hast brought it to fulfilment, then shalt thou understand all.

But this, O Lord, is not the work of a single day, nor is it child's play. In this shell lies the whole kernel of the perfection of those who seek God.

Son, that must not frighten thee back, nor discourage thee, but rather draw thee to climb upward to the higher goal, or at the least to bear a longing thereto in thy heart. If thou wert already so far on the way that thou wert free from all blind love to thyself, and wert ready and prepared to obey every beck of thy fatherly superior whom I have set over thee, then might mine eye rest with pleasure upon thee, and thy whole life would flow along in peace and joy. For as soon as thou no longer wishest this or that in thine own self-conceit, but shalt have yielded thyself wholly to thy God without gainsay and from the innermost depth of thy heart, and shalt have laid down all thy wishes into the hand of God, from that moment onward shalt thou be at rest, and shalt find thyself at one with God, in that no other thing shall be to thee so agreeable and pleasing as God's pleasure.

Whoever hath thus, in simplicity of heart, swung his thoughts upward to God, and hath loosed himself from the inordinate love or hate of any created thing, he alone shall be fit and worthy to receive the gift of devotion. For where the Lord findeth empty vessels,

there He layeth in his blessing. And the more completely any one looseneth his heart from the love of that which perisheth, and the more completely he maketh his own self to waste away under deepest disregard, by so much the quicker cometh this mercy, by so much the deeper it presseth in, and by so much the higher the free heart of man is lifted up.

Then the eyes of man are opened, then standeth he amazed in rapture, then his whole heart is dilated, for the hand of the Lord is now with him, and he hath given himself wholly and for all eternity into His hand. Lo, thus is that man blest who seeketh God with his whole heart, and letteth his spirit no longer cling to the things that perish.

I

Everything spoken in this dialogue is wholly true; only it is not merely not the work of a single day, but not even the work of a single life-period; it is rather an uncompromising process of growth that can not be hastened at will, but must gradually unfold itself in four great stages and must furthermore be properly brought to maturity in each separate period, if any real and beneficial good is to arise therefrom. There may be no compulsion about it; a hastening of growth occurs only in times of suffering; the first half of every task is mostly the hardest; from that point onward it goes more quickly and easily to the end.

The first stage is the seeking for a philosophy of life, and the dissatisfaction with the usual conceptions of the universe: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger!" The second is the turning to the eternal, supernatural truth: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." The third stage is the new life which must gradually take shape therefrom, though falling into many divisions. And the last has the promise of the prophet Zechariah: "At evening time there shall be light." Out of the first stage the youthful man must pass with pure thoughts directed toward an ideal, with no stigma of immorality upon his conscience, with pleasure in work, and with a considerable amount of knowledge useful for his life-calling. If the second period is rightly spent, it will be devoted to the acquisition of three important things: position as a citizen of the state, a worthy marriage, and a sound religious and philosophical view of life. The third stage is that of the confirmation of this view in the struggle of life; this stage forms the real work of life. The fourth is the crowning of life with true success, and

the final transition to a larger sphere of activity.

It is clear from the beginning that this course of development really rests upon self-training, and usually takes its start in that period of life in which every earnest man is tired of the "fables of the world" and is in the same frame of mind in which Dante has his great poem begin with the words: "In the midway of this our mortal life, I found me in a gloomy wood astray;" or in which St. Theresa says: "My soul was submerged in the dream of earthly things, but it has pleased the Lord to awaken me from this slumber of death, and I beseech Him nevermore to let me fall back therein." What education can do up to this point is, as regards the inner life, merely of a preparatory and prophylactic nature, and consists in keeping the young human being away from a wholly materialistic conception of the world, as well as from a merely formal religion, both of which would make difficult his later approach to a true philosophical and religious conviction. Such children as are educated in the natural sciences alone, as well as those who have heard of Christianity too early and too

often, or have been trained to make use of religious expressions and forms mechanically (often against the grain), only rarely grow up to be men who later have the power of finding the way of peace. It is the especial task of education to keep the young soul free from the strain of immorality, and inclined toward a purer life than one that is based merely upon the senses. The soil on which the noble plant of a true religion should later take root and flourish is rendered unfit for that purpose by nothing so much as by the dominance of sensuality. The soaring-power of the spirit is thereby broken, and is regenerated again only with difficulty and partially, if at all. With this, we return to the thought already expressed elsewhere, that for the education of those who are to be given a higher culture (for the boys, at least, and probably also for their mothers and governesses and women teachers) the so-called classical education is indispensable, and on the whole to be preferred to the ordinary religious and moral instruction. Christianity then comes easily of itself, later on, if any one has honestly traversed this stage of instruction in the classical philosophy (which can not and should not be the final stage); and, as

history has shown, Christianity bears its finest fruits upon a classical substratum. In particular, a classically educated spirit will never be able to sink into mere ecclesiasticism, and still less into the insipidities and the trivialities which, much as they are foreign to the great and noble nature of pristine Christianity, nevertheless, to its immense harm, cling to the quite common conception of it.

Besides, Christianity undoubtedly contains an element of alienation from the world, an element that can not be so suitable for the education of a young human being still intent upon the growth of all his intellectual faculties, as it is for the self-training that comes later. Indeed, one may go so far as to say that physical well-being (though by no means the highest form of feeling nor the highest destiny), and a certain human impulse to self-exaltation (which later finds its limit in the true humility of Christianity) are natural and even necessary to the growth of youth, and for this very reason the classical examples and ideals (and those of the Old Testament also, of course) fit in better with this period than do those of the Christian era. Only, the classical education must be adapted to the circumstances of

the pupils' environment, or this environment must itself be able to be elevated at the same time, or it will often make the pupils discontented with their lot. Indeed, it is even as Flattich rightly pointed out of old in the naïve words, "Youth must have its time of raging, though not wickedly so;" and for those who do not have this period in youth, it often comes afterward, only worse and more secretly.

When education has planted in the young human being a disposition inclined toward the ideal, and has begotten in him an aversion to all that is vulgar, together with some good life-habits, then it has performed its most important duty. At present, indeed, it wants to do more than this, but in reality it accomplishes less.

Two things must be made particularly clear to the young man at the conclusion of the first life-period: in the first place, within the limits of natural laws men attain to everything, so to speak, that they earnestly desire. Only, they must begin at the right time, must proceed in the right order, and must above all things not chase two hares at once. To become rich, renowned, learned, or virtuous, there is need in every case of a single-minded and orderly struggle that suffers no compe-

tition of some rival purpose. One must therefore know what one wants to be, and choose the right thing as early as possible. Then "the man grows, of himself, along with his greater aims." Without these, he is vainly tempted to seek his development in the artificial forcing-beds of education.

The way in which this subjectivity (not wrong at the first) comes to an end is not one that can be exactly determined, either as to the time the end takes place or as to the cause that brings it about. The change usually begins with premonitions which eventually become strong impressions. These are often called forth merely by isolated words which sometimes have been spoken by men, apparently by chance, but are more frequently derived from reading. Books that fall into a man's hand at just the right time are nowadays most frequently the instrumentality of the summons to a higher life. Many a time, also, the soul suddenly, in moments of elevation, sees itself transported to a quite different plane from that on which it really lives. It espies, as often happens to the mountain-wanderer, a new and beautiful region quite near before it, but which is still separated from its present standing-ground by a vast chasm, over which a

bridge leads, but only far below in the depths.

In this period isolated experiences also occur which may be classed as strange, as hard to be described, and as by no means essential to development. On this point mystic writers say that there are three kinds of more intimate union with the divine: first, the quite regular kind (thus already understood in the Old Testament), that comes through submission and sincere love, a union that always remains open in its nature, that nothing can interrupt save a man's own will contending against the will of God, and that is at once reëstablished as soon as the will is again accordant; second, an extraordinary kind, that comes through devout contemplation, which can not, however, be artificially produced, but which is only a yet greater affection of the heart, waiting in patience and humility for the response that God will perhaps give thereto; and lastly, a still more sensitive feeling of nearness to God, coming for the most part quite unexpectedly, but, of all the three, the least necessary and important for the progress of the inner life.

The end of the first stage of life is not satisfying — can not and should not be.

All subjectivity is a form of thinking that ends in dissatisfaction, and the nobler the soul, the more quickly and deeply it falls into it. Along with this there very often comes a certain failure in the outer life, almost enigmatical; the cause is given in very picturesque language by an Israelitic prophet, Hosea, "I will hedge up the way with thorns, and I will make a fence against her, that she shall not find her paths." It is the genuine mercy of God when every false way a man wishes to strike into is hedged with thorns; or when he, in another beautiful Israelitic simile, like a lily among thorns, can find his growth only straight upward. Those are the sorrows of youth for which later one is most thankful.

Nevertheless, because of these things a certain sadness masters the soul, and but few noteworthy men are to be found who have not temporarily suffered melancholy in their youth. Even at best, they live in the mood which Goethe depicts in the words:

So still and thoughtful? Something is lacking; freely confess.
"Contented am I, but 'tis not well with me, nevertheless."

But, as every brave young soul sees, life is not given us with the purpose that we may always be only "still and thoughtful," nor that we may consume ourselves in disconsolate complaints or in the pessimism that wastes the soul's powers. Those are the conditions that attend transition, and must appear. A new life must spring therefrom, but one feels, indeed, that a kind of death first lies between.

This is the surrender of the personal will, intent upon the selfish life; this will a man renounces with so much difficulty that Calvin was able to found upon this fact his doctrine of a formal predestination of some to this development of his true existence, and of others to a loss of it. But every such death, for those who bear within them the seed of an eternal life, is not the final goal, but the means to a new and higher development of life. Whoever is unable to hold fast to this hope with the tenacity with which Job clung to it, and yet is no longer able to find any satisfaction in the world of the senses, falls now into a gloomy asceticism which is forever shovelling at his grave; or into an idle dialogue (in diaries and letters) with his painful dis-

satisfaction with the universe; or into the confused Buddhistic longing for some Nirvana; or, finally, into one of the various other aberrations of the human spirit, which all agree only in considering the true way as an impossible or fantastic one.

At this point of life, for a time, the word of salvation is, Forward!

II

At about the middle of a man's life, and often the most quickly in the case of the best and most successful lives, there comes a moment of dissatisfaction with all that has hitherto been attained. This is more frequently the case among the cultured than among the other classes, because the continuous struggle of the latter for existence partly spares them this dissatisfaction and more clearly shows the way to free themselves from it. When, at this time, any one stands quite at the exit-gates of earthly existence, all human concerns appear to him literally nothing worth, and he would never feel kindly toward them again, even in their highest activities, if the wisdom of this world did not bring him back into the belief that these are only morbid sensations that

must be overcome by a feeling of robust vitality. This, to be sure, they must do, but not unless a real death of the selfish nature precedes; upon such a death the most in every human life depends, although this event does not always come to pass in just the same form. The same feeling, however, is present in all nobler souls, that they do not get forward with their "intentions to do better," but daily find new hindrances in themselves and in the surrounding world; and that, in their own nature, what is lacking is not the dream, indeed, but the *power* of attaining an existence truly worthy of man. Those are conditions that often last for years; in their later period arise thoughts which, to some, make this process seem to resemble the ascent of a mountain.

But this ascending of the mountain does not always lead to the true summit it is designed for, even in the case of the best men, and in this respect, also, one is tempted to believe in predestination. Another mountain-peak which is sometimes attained is a noble scepticism, such as Gottfried Keller gives expression to in the touching words that, at some time or other in life, one must accustom himself to the thought of a real death,

and that if he then gathers himself together, he does not become any the worse man therefor. Certainly not, only he is no perfectly satisfied man, with the thirst for truth and eternal life slaked; that is a goal which the most beautiful sceptical philosophy never reaches.

Doubting thought stands on a still higher plane in "The Holy Grail" of Tennyson:

"*Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,*
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind:
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried: 'This Quest is not for thee.'"

Beyond this thought the most earnest and sincere souls would never get, if it were not for the solution which the English poet himself offers at the conclusion of his profound poem:

"*Let visions of the night or of the day*
Come, as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision — yea, his very hand and foot —

In moments when he feels he can not die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again."

It is very strange that a matter that has been in existence for almost two thousand years, that has already busied the minds and hearts of millions of teachers and writers, and that has been borne with great cost and exertions over seas and preached to nations to whom it was unknown, has become unfamiliar in its own place of dominion and among the most cultured nations of the globe. Or can we asseverate that the spirit, or, let us say, even the thought, of Christianity is something that is generally known and acknowledged in our European states?

Far removed from this view, some within so-called Christendom, like the Roman procurator Festus, hold Christianity to be a sort of more or less harmless superstition concerning "one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive"; others regard it as a society which it is the proper thing to belong to, without necessarily having any further interest in it; a third class looks upon it as a hierarchy of priests which, for reasons mostly external, they either reverence or abhor. To yet others it

is a science called theology, to penetrate which there is need of very long courses of study and many examinations. And when they come to the particulars in the "structure of doctrine," not many among the learned wholly agree as to what faith is, or mercy, or the significance of the "sacrifice of Christ," whether there is predestination and eternal punishment, or a "restoration of all things," or what are the methodical steps one must take, to be saved. Every one who ventures into these labyrinths of theological and philosophical thought, without at the same time possessing a very decided aspiration toward the highest truth and a very sound understanding of human nature, is apparently in danger of losing the one or the other. And so, thousands of the most cultured men of our day have, in fact, given up making any further trial of what seems to be joined with only trouble, contention, doubt, and renunciation of the natural enjoyments of life, only to lead, at the end, to nothing other than a kind of human slavery, without any better assurance than before. Christianity is now, for the greater part of Christians, a doctrine of the churches and the schools, which one listens to as long as one must, but from which a cultured man will in-

wardly free himself as quickly as possible, even if he still outwardly believes he must allow himself to fit into forms of the social life when once they have become historical.

The simple answer to this is that we can neither dispense with Christianity nor put something in its place. We do not know (and it would be useless to wish to discover) what would have become of the civilized world, if Christianity had not appeared in it when it did; but it is certain that we can no longer get away from it now, nor ignore it, but we must reckon with it as with something that will endure, yet can not be wholly explained by science. True, science can not be prevented from discovering, as completely as possible, everything that is knowable, or from extending the sphere of the knowable as widely as possible; that is its right and its duty. With this there goes, in the conception of particular minds, the supposition that everything is knowable that concerns mankind, or that, at any rate, everything can be made knowable in time. This is the basis of a considerable part of the courage and the perseverance found in scientific investigation. But just as little may it be forbidden us to doubt

that men will ever succeed in completely fathoming human nature in all its relationships to the universal Being and in its connection with all things; but even so, it is the duty (and of cultured people most of all) nevertheless, to stand firm, and in particular to put away the presumption with which imperfect knowledge, or even mere hypotheses, are wont to be set up in the place of the inward conviction as to the existence and worth of supersensual things.

Highly as humanity has cause to value science and its steady advance, it would, nevertheless, take a tremendous backward step, if one should be able to remove from the sphere of its life and from the motives of its actions everything that is not scientifically provable. This is the ideal of many educated people of our time, but it is a false and a very inadequate one.

Our knowledge is patchwork, and will remain such. We shall scarcely ever be able to know even everything that concerns ourselves. Nor do the strongest motives of our best actions spring from the sphere of knowledge; otherwise the most learned people must always be the most perfect, which is by no means the

case. Our spiritual Ego is rooted rather in the Unexplainable, and experience shows that if this something unexplainable is ever taken from the Ego in questions of faith, it tries to make up for the loss by adopting some superstition or other.

Of all the objects of faith, however, faith in Christ is historically the best established, humanly the most intelligible, and as a matter of personal experience the most easily found to be true. If in any man it is not all this, truly and enduringly, then the cause lies in his own will, or absence of will, for which the Gospel of John finds the correct expression, "as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God." Luther also truly says: "Because the expression 'to trust God and serve Him' must be so elastic that every man follows after his own thoughts, and one thinks so and the other thus, therefore He has fixed Himself to a certain place and to a certain person, since He wants to be found and met in such a way that one may not miss Him." A man's faith is, therefore, itself no force or power, else superstition must also be such, but all true power in spiritual things is the property

of God. But he summons this power and makes its appearance upon earth possible.

Only, this is likewise true, that Christianity has no effect in a man whose spirit is unbroken, who has no inner humility, but then it remains an empty form at best. If it is then united with the office of teaching, or with some other pretension of a special position or distinction, it conduces to the man's destruction. What is regarded in the outer life as an irreparable harm, "a broken existence," a rent that runs through all the plans of life, is not at all such in the inner; on the contrary, that is the soil in which faith in Christ best prospers, and they of all men are most to be pitied who despair just at the moment when they find themselves in such a position and can not grasp how near they are to salvation.

From this moment of humility there enters into man the real regenerative power of the good, which springs from that true righteousness which "counts" with God.

His further journey is, on the one hand, much easier than is often represented, for nothing more is now required

of the man for which he has not power and insight in sufficient measure, together with a gladness of hope that can no longer be wholly troubled, and with a special, personal guidance that lightens all. But, on the other hand, it is more difficult than is, in this first moment, believed. For life is yet far from its termination; indeed, now is its real starting-point, and there begins a long series of occurrences which all have the purpose of showing man his real nature more clearly than he was in position to bear earlier, and of gradually being no longer indulgent toward him in any respect, as was hitherto in great measure the case. For "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." But all this happens only in the following, or even, now and then, in the final, period of life; before, it would have been quite impossible.

III

The difference between this "new life," as Dante already called it, and the earlier seems not to be very great at first, and particularly not so great as fantasy, which always flies higher than reality, and enthusiasm, which must accompany every

great resolve, had expected. Indeed, it is possible that there will still be moments in which the soul, freed from the slavery of selfishness, is seized with a certain backward-glancing desire for the "flesh-pots of Egypt"; for, in truth, the old "enjoyment of life" fades away only by slow degrees.

But there is one essential difference that is always noticeable: first of all, in the taking away of the feeling of fear and anxiety before an uncertain future, and of the continual fluctuation between exultation and dejection, which never let the feeling of security prevail. But now there is a fixed point where there is always rest. From this there follows, of itself, more patience with oneself and others, and less dependence upon them, besides a juster discernment for the essential in all things, and therewith the true wisdom of life that springs therefrom. Finally (and this is the chief matter), there is an absence of the continuous sense of sin because it can always be at once abolished, and there is a certainty of the right road, of steady advance, and of a good outcome at the end of life: "the path of the righteous is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The first period of this division of life is usually filled up with the continuous strengthening and confirmation of these principles through tests of many kinds. These can not fail to appear very soon, for faith, in spite of what has been said above, is nothing traditional that persists once for all, but something that must be engendered anew daily and hourly. A faith that is not always living and present could not be capable of successfully withstanding the attacks of Apollyon, who desires surely to reclaim his rebellious subject.

The power of this "Spirit of the World" is very great; happily, one experiences this only gradually in life; otherwise, perhaps, no one would have the courage to take up the battle with it. But there is one power that is still greater, and that is the power of God, which is made alive in a man through true Christianity. The chief matter in this (for most) the longest period of life is, therefore, steadfastness and courage. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown;" and look not back, when thou hast once laid hand to plough.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing in this period of life is the union in man of divine control with freedom. Whatever

God wills, he carries out in the man — easily, if he gives up his will, with difficulty and sorrow, if he resists or desires to go another way, and no power in the world can any longer prevent it. But there are, nevertheless, long portions of time at this stage of life when all principles or doctrines of belief refuse their service, and everything transcendental persists in appearing again as a mere dream and sport of fantasy. Those are the dangerous times in which the soul must keep itself quite still and beware of all decisive activity. But if it is obliged to act, then let it say with the Spanish poet, "And be my life or truth or dream, right must my actions be."

There must especially rise to full certainty in the soul the conviction that an eternal divine order exists, against which all the might of men who still have freedom of action contends quite vainly, and that all real success and all true happiness consists only in the free harmony of the free human will with this order, and that punishment does not *follow* every violation of this harmony, but resides within it, and can only be set aside through God's mercy. Then, as the Berlenburg Bible says, "the commands of God acquire a pleasant aspect, and we become their good

friends and look upon them as true helps and preservers, by whose means God wishes to set to one side whatever hinders us from companionship and union with Him."

Only when this conviction has become established within us, can we have a guiding principle for fruitful activity outward; before, it is too early, and so in most cases without result. Salvation is not a doctrine in which one can remain quite the same, can say Lord, Lord, and yet be far from him, but it is some actual thing that really happens to us if we give up our will to it.

But in order that this may be able to happen to us, we must first be free from self-love, from self-concern in all its forms; that is the difficult work that is wrought within us slowly, with many a halting-place and with much cross-bearing. For we must be quite empty of ourselves before we can receive everything that we need for our understanding and feeling, but it must come in daily rations like the manna of the Old Testament, not all at once as the crafty "old man" would much rather have it, so as to be as independent as possible of God's daily grace; that is the "last error, that is worse than the first." To train us thereto, so that we

may receive the right gifts in their fulness, is the meaning of our life-guidance up to this point; only then, and not before, will our activity be full of blessing. In this connection the "social question" comes in, not only for the men of our time, but of every time; it has always existed, and always will exist, so long as there are human beings; it will never find its solution either through Church or through State, but only through the ethical power and the personal love of infinitely many individuals, each one of whom must, in the sphere of work indicated to him, do that which is specially laid upon him, and neither bury nor exchange his talent. That is his outward task in life, which he may neither evade nor be unfaithful to, and only when and in so far as he is just to this shall he teach it to others also, and help, during his lifetime, to maintain this teaching of love upon the earth. When once money, ambition, and pleasure no longer play any considerable rôle with a man, then he finds so much leisure time upon his hands that he must really look about him for some activity to fill it up, else he runs the risk of falling back, through tedium, to where he was before.

This period is, therefore, essentially made up of work and struggle, but if all goes rightly, the work is more and more joyous, done with greater and greater gladness, and without any feeling of distress, and the struggle against everything undivine in oneself or in others is more and more victorious, more and more quiet; and in this period there is finally "a rest that remaineth for the people of God." God will give them the end they are waiting for, and an end that is not sad, like that of so many noble men who had a different aim in life.

Schiller's picture is not the right one when he says, "Quietly, with vessel barely saved, the old man returns to the harbor from which, in youth, he set out with a thousand masts." No; thankful for all he has done and suffered, content with what he has become through God's mercy, and with the confident prospect of a yet greater and better field of action, he already, without waiting for his death-bed, lays his life-accounts to one side, and looks with simple quietness upon the (for him) unimportant transition into a new sphere of life.

IV

Age comes on suddenly, in most cases; very often with some special event, usually

some sickness, which performs the function of what is called picket-duty in military life. Then oftentimes there is disclosed, just as suddenly, the difference (hitherto concealed) between men and the various outcomes of their lives. While some still endeavor with redoubled eagerness to enjoy the last fruits of their autumnal days (though age often reveals them now as so little worth while), or else give themselves up to pessimistic despair over the transitoriness of all things earthly (which always forms the close of each great period of pleasure), more earnestly minded spirits are now for the first time saying: "Whither am I bound? The world's call to pleasure sounds hollow to me, now that the doors of eternity stand open before; I am sated with the whited bowl of untruth and its vapid draughts, and I bear my empty pitchers to thy springs, O thou city of God!" These are the laborers that stood idle all the day, or fatigued themselves with useless toil. These also will be accepted still, and will receive their penny at the end of the day's labor as well as those who came earlier. The mercy of the Lord of Toil thus wills it, though many murmur against this, even yet.

But it is better, nevertheless, if this

incoming has taken place earlier and the third period is not a time of turning about, but merely the natural sequence and development of the second. For the true steps of life have about them something of the Dantean Paradise; namely this, that in each of them, even in the lowest, already resides something of the uppermost — something that pacifies the soul, without longing for more, and yet with hope for more.

In the life of people who have become old, three sorts of dispositions are regularly shown. The ordinary one, when outward circumstances are favorable, is that of elderly people who are fond of life and who want as much as possible to enjoy the remnant of their existence in a finer or coarser manner, and accordingly sink now and then into caricatures of youth. The basis of this disposition is selfishness, which, even in its finer form, at last affects unpleasantly every one who meets it. Aristocratic idlers have such an exit to life, for the most part. A worthier end is when people who have been busy for the most of life take their repose, whether it be a resting upon their laurels, or, as more frequently happens, upon their accumulated capital. These are, in the best instances,

the cheerful old people who are treasured and cared for by their relatives, spend their last days in respectably doing nothing, revel in memories of their youth, or student-years, or travels, or campaigns, and now and then compose memoirs, or let their jubilees be celebrated. Apart from a certain vanity and pettiness that is always joined therewith, this is an innocent exit to life, and the world is as a rule lenient toward it — if for no other reason, at least for the reason that these people no longer stand in anybody's way; therefore it gladly gives them a handsome burial and a few fitting obituary notices in the papers on the day of the funeral, and with that its concernment is definitely fulfilled. The third kind of conclusion to life is the moving forward to a higher existence, the hand continuously at the plough, never looking backward to the past, but always directing the eyes toward what is yet to be attained. This conception of life is really only possible with persons who believe in a future life; nevertheless, it also appears among other earnest workers, but is then joined with sadness over the continual decline of the powers. This is the worthiest, indeed the only worthy exit to life, though often accompanied with sorrows of some sort, to

keep one in fit condition for conflict. These three endings of life resemble the three caskets in Shakespeare's drama: the first, in the golden casket, is outwardly the most splendid, but within is full of emptiness and is at bottom to be despised; the second, in the silver casket, is not unworthy, but somewhat "ordinary"; the third contains, in mostly invisible form, the real crown of a life that has been wisely understood and well-employed to the very end, and that bears within itself the full assurance of a yet better continuation beyond.

At any rate, the special task of the final step of life is living in all sincerity in nearness to God — something that it is much easier to think of than to describe. The descriptions of those who have themselves experienced this suddenly leave us, as a rule, in the lurch, whether because they lived in order to act, and not to describe, or because they disdained saying things about themselves which, at their stage of advancement, seemed matters of course and nowise meritorious, but something to be continuously received in humility. The goal of this period is just here — no longer to receive anything for one's own sake, but to become a blessing to others in that hum-

ble spirit which now has come to belong to the virtues that have been won.

To begin with, there will usually come a great and final trial; for all men in whom God takes a real interest (if we may so speak) must again and again, in the different periods of their life, pass anew into a kind of smelting fire, whose glow, as Dante says, alone brings the spirit to its majority and separates the inferior elements of its nature, which perhaps appear as still necessary at a lower stage. Without a firm trust in God, such as should now exist in this final period of life, these last trials were often not to be endured; yet in them, nevertheless, each hard blow now has a tenfold effect. It is the best sign of advance if the soul possesses the grace to welcome this suffering and not to be tired of it until God himself removes it as quite superfluous. Psychologically correct in this regard is the remark of St. Angela of Foligni, that men at this stage must still, for their penance, harbor within themselves for a time, quite against their will, the very faults which once they voluntarily cultivated.

Out of all this there then arises the thoroughly humble man, no longer in the least infatuated with himself, to whom

everything is right that befalls him, who believes he deserved nothing better, but something still worse if pure justice had been done, and who can let everything please him if it is God's will. But if this is all genuine and not mere pious talking, this is a difficult task for which the man will be completely qualified only toward the end of his life. For self-love must be burnt out still more thoroughly than before, and he must be inflicted, or at least threatened, with the hardest blow that can be given to his special failing. If he passes through this without ever losing his trust in God, then he has approached nearer to the divine than could happen in any other way ; and if there is such a thing at all as a life of blessed spirits after the fashion of our present feelings and conceptions, then he will be brought so near to this by acquiring such a temperament, that a transition to that life will now appear conceivable and possible to him.

But in that case the last aggravations of the earthly life have, without doubt, the further purpose of making the departure from it less difficult for the man thus tried ; just as nothing in old people pleases us less, or makes a more vulgar impression

upon us, than when they still hang tightly on to life.

One of the best aids is never to look back, because he who in Purgatory "looks back, must turn back"; and further, not to lose a single minute of life, but to keep one's full activity up to the last moment. For the purpose of life in the period of age is to bear fruit, not to repose, and so long as something is still left to be done, what is already done is to be regarded as nothing.

The characteristic quality of this sort of old people is not an imaginary "saintliness," but their wholesouledness. The only saintliness we attain to on this earth consists in a complete harmony with the divine will and in a complete readiness to fall in with it, so that no serious struggle between good and evil any longer finds place within ourselves. On the other hand, a mediæval saint rightly says that saintliness, whenever it is genuine, sets the outward man in order also. For God is a "God of order" and by no means a friend of singularities of any sort, especially in outward things. People who set a value upon such singularities, though they may not be wholly spurious "saints," are certainly, nevertheless, very weak

ones, whose peculiarities make them sometimes uneasy to live with. If religion, in this final stage of life, does not at least set such things right, but lets the man go on being querulous and selfish and difficult for those around him, then it has never been of much worth. A special indication of the ripeness of age, furthermore, is the union of qualities which, at other periods of life, are wont to exclude one another; for example, naïveté and shrewdness, dignity and childlike gayety, fineness of taste and complete simplicity, sternness and gentleness, clear judgment and enthusiasm of emotion. This alone gives the impression of completeness, as far as is possible here upon earth.

One or the other of my readers may still ask how one can remain young in old age. The most important spiritual means is probably "always to be learning some new thing," to have an interest in something and to keep something always before oneself. Therefore the great apostle of Christianity said shortly before his departure: "Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal, unto the prize of the high calling of

God in Christ Jesus: let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you." This, then, is a clear and simple road, and in this direction is already contained the final watchword of life: Obedience. Everything that is done for oneself, for one's own elevation, even in the best sense, has, nevertheless, a slight after-taste of self-seeking, and in old age one will scarcely keep his life spiritually sound to the final moment, if it does not result at last in an absolute military obedience, and in a "harvest of God,"—reaped, that is, for Him, and not for ourselves. The secret of religion lies indeed in one's keeping near to God, in all the stages of life; but first, one must learn to endure it (not to flee from it); then to seek it; and finally to have it, and "dwell in the everlasting glow."

That this can not happen upon earth altogether without suffering, even to the very end, lies in the nature of things, and is shown in the life of many admirable men, who have eagerly longed for rest, and have said with old Simeon at the end of their days, "Now lettest thou thy bondservant depart, O Master, according

to thy word, in peace." Besides, as already pointed out, it may really happen that a so-called beautiful death, in the circle of one's own people and amidst the general recognition of one's fellow-citizens, may not at all mean the best destiny and the highest recognition on the part of God, as would some heroic death which is itself a last deed done for country or for humanity. But our time has become so feeble in its Christianity that such a thought now lies quite outside the reckoning of most men, even the most devout. But at any rate it does not lie in their power of will what form their death shall take, any more than formerly what form their life should take, and they must, under any circumstance, have found their peace with God in respect to this last of all life-problems also.

The most beautiful thing about a life near to its close is its repose of soul, that abounding peace which nothing can shake any longer, and which has fought it out with God and men, and has prevailed.

The essential element in all religion requisite thereto is very simple, and really lies already in the forgotten meaning of that word itself. It consists in the care-

ful and constant maintenance of the "bond" which unites us with God through our unfailing good-will toward Him, and through our renunciation of all that stands in the way — what the Scriptures call "seeking God." This is our part. Then God also comes "ere we are aware, and lets much good fall to our share." He comes even to such as know him only very imperfectly (and, for that matter, that is the case with us all), if only there is a sincere longing for Him in their hearts.

But unless He does come, each and every religious practice, in whatsoever form it now takes or may conceivably take hereafter, is but a still-born device of man, and never procures us what we are all nevertheless seeking — Happiness.

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